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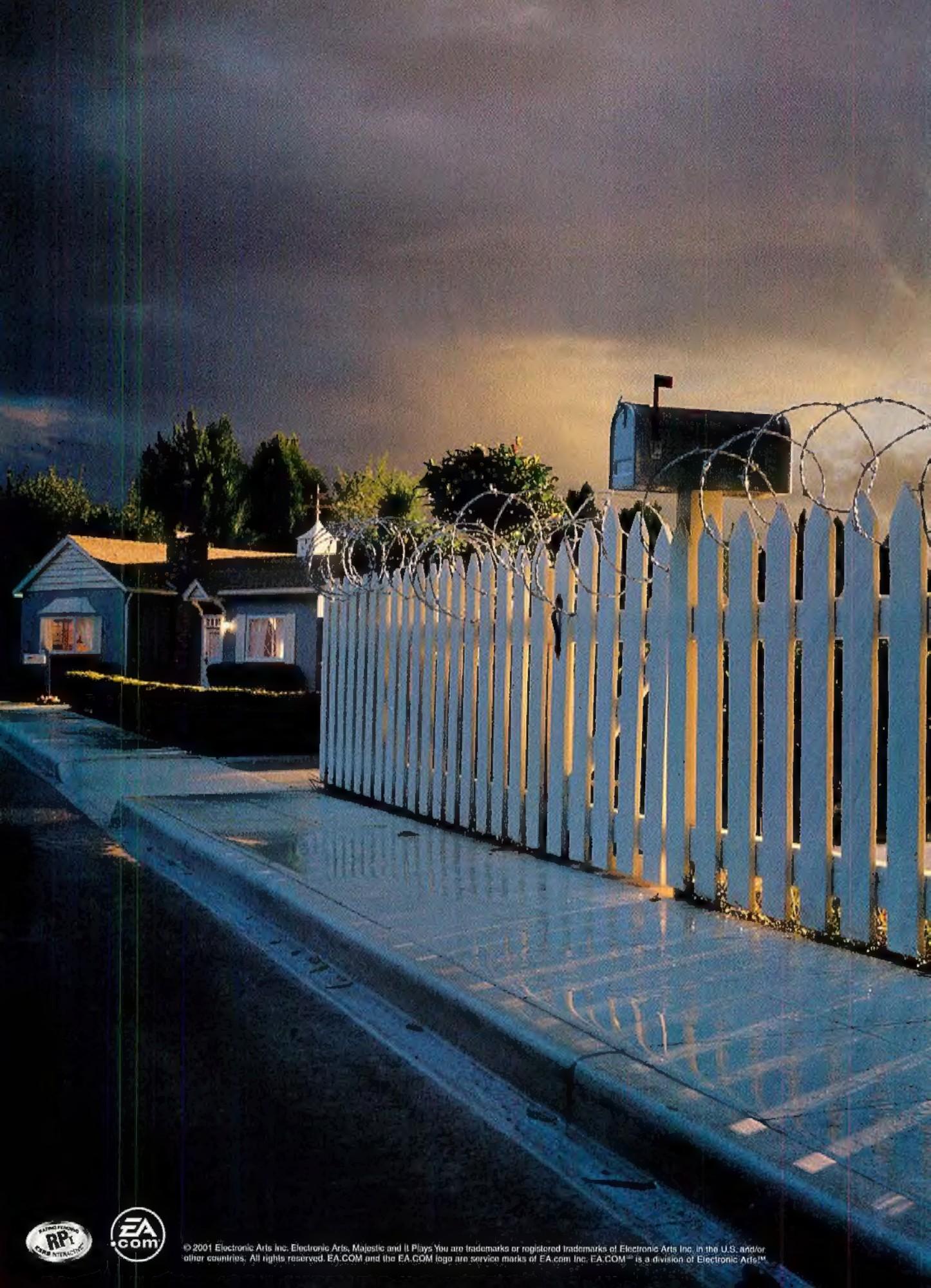
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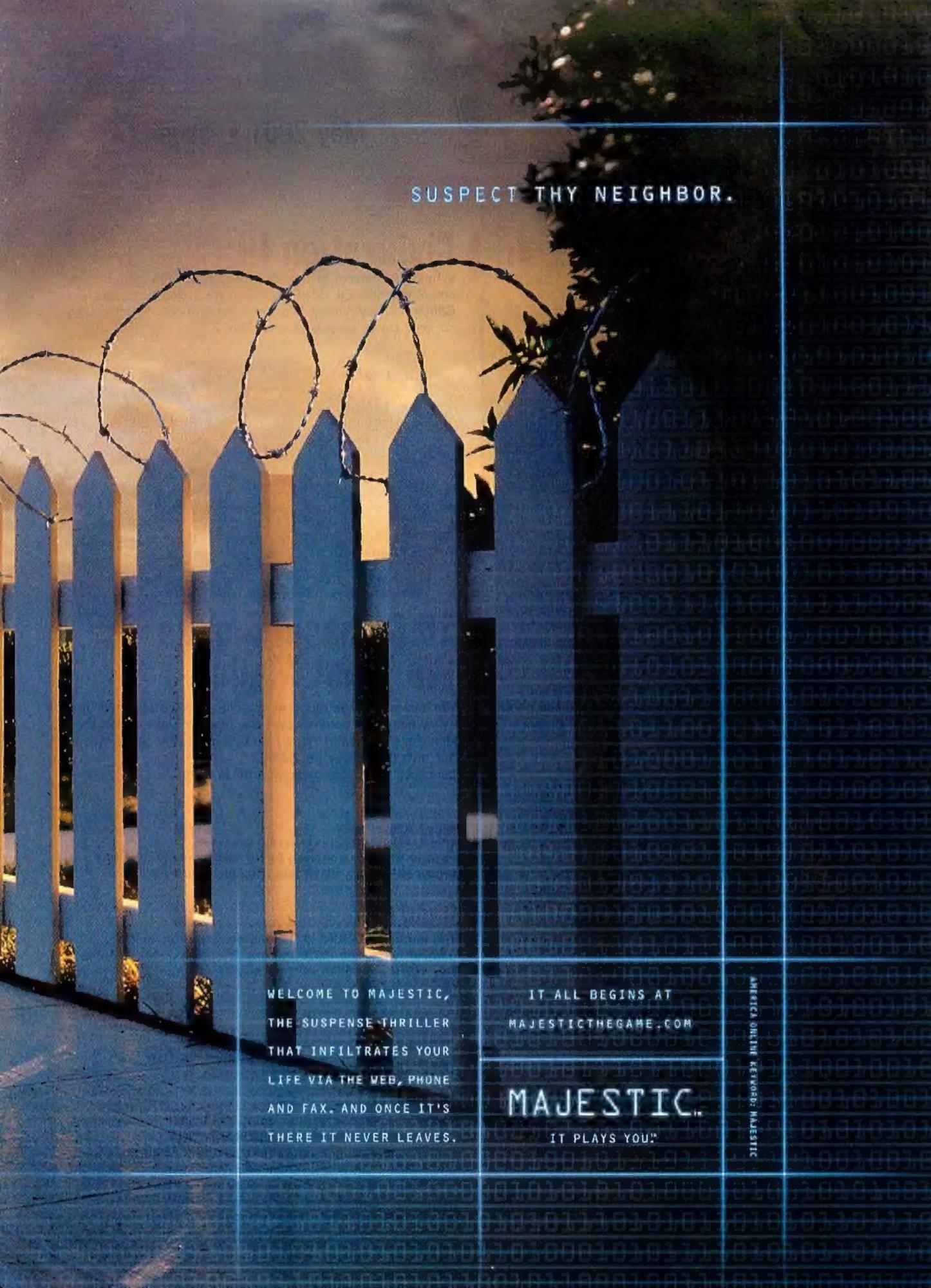
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CLIVE
BARKER'S
UNDYING

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10 colossal games Jeff wants made.

GEORGE JONES

Can You Tell Me How to Get...

Every month, the CGW editors get together for our ratings review meeting.

It's sort of a trial by jury fire where we go over our ratings for every game review. The presenting writer or editor makes his pitch, and the other editors who have played the game argue whether the rating is appropriate or not. It's intense, but when combined with our policy that writers finish the game they're reviewing, it makes for a tough double-filter.

To give you a clue as to how rough these meetings can get, I'm going to let you in on another, smaller meeting we hold every month: the meeting for the How We Rate box on the opening section of our reviews. This one was held via email:

PRICE: Any ideas for the star ratings this month? How about Sesame Street characters?

5 - Oscar The Grouch

4 - The Count

3 - Big Bird

2 - Cookie Monster

1 - Elmo

JONES: Where, pray tell, do Bert and Ernie enter the picture?

WANCZYK: And the Snufalupagous (sp?)

PRICE: I was thinking about that last night. Grover has also been left out. And Steve, Snufalupagous was on my original list but I replaced him with Big Bird. After all, he is BB's friend, and he is invisible, so he's got a bit less going for him.

WANCZYK: I don't want to get into a big argument over this but I do believe that

Snufalupagous is in fact visible now. And isn't it Ernie and Bert



not Bert and Ernie?

GREEN: Time for Big Daddy Green to chime in: 1) yeah, Snufalupagous is now visible, but I don't know if he rates, except maybe at the bottom. 2)

Grover not only deserves to be on the list, but he should be high up. 3) Cookie Monster is getting unfairly dissed here, I think. If we have to use Big Bird, I think he's more of a 2 than CM.

PRICE: 1) Thank god we clarified that. He's still out. 2) Grover is OK, but he tries way too hard to be entertaining, and that makes him a somewhat sad and tragic little blue thingie. 3) Screw Cookie Monster, he's a one trick pony. Now Big Bird, he's got some real complexity of character. His meekness and good nature are obviously born out of some deeply felt size issues.

COFFEY: Grover is at least a 4. Cookie monster is at least a 3—considering the crap we eat, where do we get off disrespecting a muppet that would totally fit in here? Big Bird and Snuffleupagous barely rate—they aren't even real muppets, they're guys in suits. They're stadium mascots with a year-round job.

From here, the thread degenerated into the usual insults and masculinity questioning, but I think you get the point. Now imagine what our review ratings meetings are like... *CGW*

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LETTERS

Letter of the Month

I want to say hello to all of you guys, but especially to old man Green, who last month described the closest heaven available to mankind: being alone at home with your games. What I want to say is that for some time now I've been thinking about how lucky you guys are, sitting behind your desks and playing games, pretending you're working hard. Cranky old Green said, "You are not alone" (Greenepeak, March 2001). Now I can say the same to you; I have found my heaven.

Since the first Monday of January (the last I can remember), I've been out of work and staying home, killing my way to the lord of terror or becoming the holy hope for the allies. Slowly but surely, I am becoming the "Basement King" I always dreamed about. Right now I am nearly naked and my shirt is lying somewhere between three pizza boxes and your magazine, but I don't care anymore. A voice in my head tells me that I should be working out or doing some things, but that voice is just a whisper now. You're not alone, guys; now I know what it's like to live in your world.

Jonathan Dupuis

Jonathan: Put some clothes on, clean up the pizza boxes, and STEP AWAY FROM YOUR COMPUTER.

A Call for Change: Readers Respond

Apparently, this country thinks I am old enough to wield a deadly vehicle, namely a car, but I can't see a pair of breasts or some animated blood. This is in response to George Jones' utterly absurd "A Call for Change," in the 200th issue (Read.me, page 33). I have been a reader of your magazine for a couple of years now. I'm 16 and have been playing violent games since I was 10, when I played KILLER INSTINCT on my Super Nintendo. Sex and violence haven't impeded my proper mental development. I am a completely normal human being; I am proof that this craze of over-censorship is nothing but a load of crap. Parents, there's an obvious time when a child is ready to be exposed to the real world, and it isn't 17, as the movie and game industries seem to think it is.

If violence and sex turn kids into drug addicts and gun-toting maniacs, then I must

be someone special to be able to handle the pressure on my psyche telling me to go out and kill. Right? NOT! I'm not special at all; I'm just proof that arguments like George Jones' are needlessly encouraging censorship. Do any of you "adults" remember what it's like to be told you can't see an R-rated movie? And now snotty, uptight parents and you people at CGW are telling me I shouldn't be able to even buy a copy of HALF-LIFE because it will disturb me mentally?

For the last time, seeing animated violence doesn't make kids want to go shoot other people. If it does, than that child is seriously disturbed and should be admitted to a mental institution. The bottom line is, please stop encouraging child censorship laws. They are pointless and stupid, and they are ineffective. All they succeed in doing is making it harder for "kids" like me to see movies and buy games.

Zack Lee (aka Zack the Ripper)

After reading your commentary "A Call for Change," one glaring omission came to mind. You take umbrage with game publishers that advertise in magazines with a large proportion of underage readers. But you neglect to point out that if these same magazines would enforce advertising limits to prevent Mature-rated games from being advertised in their publication, that would provide the same benefit.

You note that some members of the public look at game publishers as irresponsible and greedy. I would submit that they look at game magazines the same way – irresponsible and greedy. If you are going to call these various groups to task for the current situation, why leave yourselves out? I believe that game magazines are setting the standard for retail chains to follow. And consequently, you are in the position to have the greatest single effect in this matter. Let's see CGW belly up to the bar and take the first, responsible, and public step of eliminating ads for M games from your magazine!

William Farrell

Publisher Lee Uniacke responds: It would be convenient to say that Mature-rated games simply should not be advertised in our magazine. However, the handful of magazines that cover computer games are the only cost-effective way to market PC games today. If we restricted M-rated game ads, marketing them would become impossible, putting a deep chill on creating them. This de facto censorship is untenable given the fact that 87 percent of our readership, and the vast majority of PC game buyers in general, are 17 years old and over. CGW covers the entire spectrum of games and gamers' tastes. We strongly feel that games like DIABLO, HALF-LIFE, and DEUS EX have a place here.

Write to us at:

Cgwletters@ziffdavis.com

For help with subscriptions:

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Canadian Corner

I was reading through my CGWs (I am a big fan), and in Letters I saw a title that said "CGW vs. The Canadians: Part XXIV" [February 2001]. I read the letter, and to tell you the truth I was really pissed. First, I am not going to tell you that I went to pick up my magazine on a dogsled because that is just all BS. I have everything that you have in the U.S. I read the same books, I ride the same cars, and I have almost everything that you have. So if I were you I would SHUT YOUR MOUTH. So go ahead and make another smart-ass remark. And when you do, you will lose another reader.

But I won't care. It's all the other Canadians that will care. I don't go around and start talking trash about the Americans. And sooner or later you are just gonna have to take the Canadian price off the cover of the magazine, because no Canadian is gonna read the magazine if you keep making smart-ass remarks to the letters. So I am saying this to you, CGW: "Stop."

**Nicholas Yakimchuk
Vita, Manitoba**

We'd like to stop, Nicholas. But we can't. It's a sickness. Kind of like the way you guys are always eating that weird bacon. What's that all about??

This is in reply to the letter from Darius N. in issue 201. I would just like to say that I enjoy the way you guys make fun of them Canadians. My subscription does not run out until April of 2003, but if you guys make this your letter of the month and keep making fun of those damn Canadians, you can extend my subscription for another year. Just send me a bill. Keep up the good work, guys!!!

Thomas Herzog

Thanks, Thomas. We're definitely gonna need you to resubscribe; for some reason, the Canucks are dropping like flies. U.S.A. #1!



DOES THIS MAN READ CGW? The Right Honourable Jean Chrétien, Prime Minister of Canada. [Hey, is that pronounced cré-ün?]

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RUSSELL SIEPE

LETTERS

Enforcement of the ESRB ratings creates a system where these games can go to the mature gamers who want them, while staying out of the hands of the kids they are not intended for. We support that system and believe that most of our readers do also.

Editor-in-Chief George Jones responds: Our philosophy is not that M-rated games shouldn't be advertised. We wouldn't want to see ads for R-rated movies banned from newspapers, either. Our view is that there should be intelligent guidelines for how those games should be depicted. Just as movie previews must be approved for all audiences, M-rated ads should be approved for all publications. Regulations prescribing the depiction of such content already exist, but new proposals may take it a step further. See our related story in Read.me this issue to learn more.

in, obviously, but in this issue I couldn't help but read every single article, review, and letter. It took me back. I'm only 21, and have been computer gaming for, what — 12, 14 years now? I could revel in the nostalgia, though many of the older games (*ZORK*, *WING COMMANDER*, and others) I had not played until years after their respective release dates. I'd like to think I live a normal, healthy social life, but in the end I realize that I stayed up late at night playing *SEAFOX* on my old Apple IIe, and, more recently, jumped out of my chair at my PC as I wandered through the *Richenbacher* at 3 in the morning on *SYSTEM SHOCK 2*. I guess some would laugh when I say this, but I feel that computer gaming crosses and even transcends all ages and generations. Hey, we all have a little of that computer geek in us, right? Right?

Christian Liu

The 200th Issue

OUCH! I have been reading CGW since 1986, and I have to admit that the 200th issue was going to be just another issue on this end. However, issue 200 (March 2001) surprised me. You really went all out — intelligent, insightful articles that I gently perused as I worked through the issue. You folks really "suspended disbelief" that this was not just another gaming magazine. Then, BAM! The G.O.D. advert flies forth (pages 92 and 93) and the tenuous bubble of disbelief was shattered. Your advertising department must hate you a lot to let that one in on your special issue. As they would say on *That '70s Show*, "You got BURNED!" Or, in the parlance of the audience that advert from the hormonally challenged people at G.O.D. are courting (and your future customers, LOL): G.O.D. ownz JOOZ! You fell for that like a bunch of nOObs.

Garrett LePage

200th edition. And what an edition it was. I have never written to CGW, never having a reason to. But after reading the 20th anniversary edition I felt the need to compliment everyone at CGW for a job well done. I have never before read an entire CGW magazine straight through, cover to cover. I usually skip the stuff that I have no interest

You guys kick major amounts of butt! Twenty flipping years! That's eight more than I've been around! 200 freaking issues! I remember reading an old PC Accelerator and them bragging about having been around for an entire year! They suck! You rule! Yeah! I'm soaring myself! This looks like Jeff's most recent article! You should call it something besides Greenspeak! You should call it something like Majorwhiner or Green's House of Whiness!

You guys kick!

_0_Crash_Man

What can I say? I received the much-anticipated, much-hyped 20th anniversary edition, and even without opening the magazine, I was disappointed. I'm glad I subscribe, because there is no way I would pay \$7.99 for this flimsy an issue. After all your hype about how great the issue was going to be, I allowed myself to begin expecting something that would be screaming its way into my hands — instead of "flop" onto the kitchen table. It was truly gracious of you to give my mailman a break with this small issue.

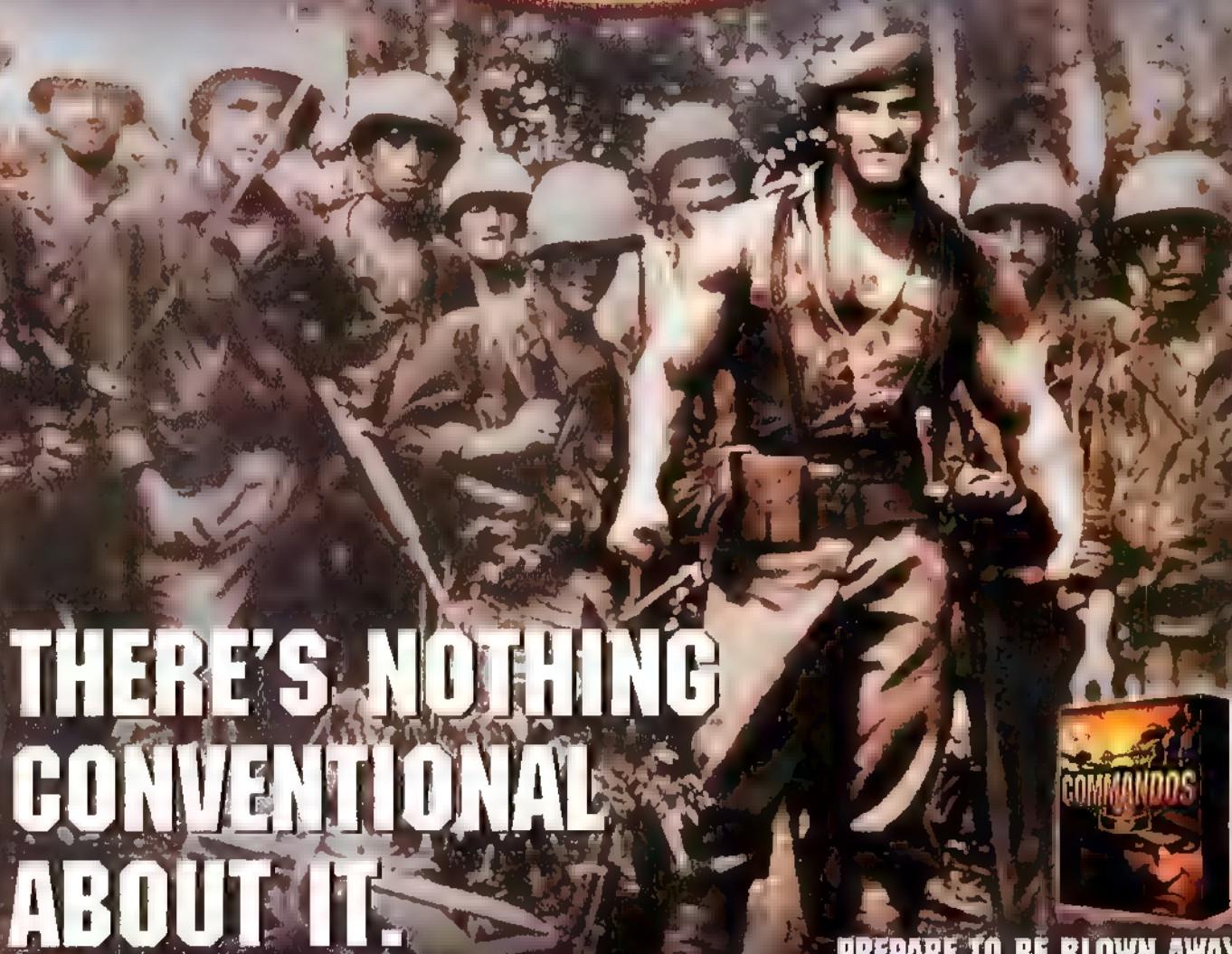
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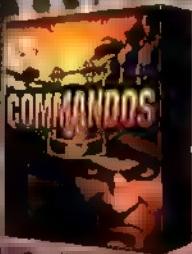
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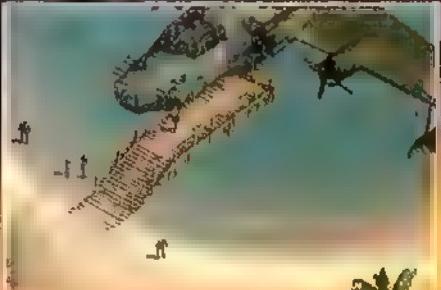
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EIDOS

anniversary issue of CGW, I anticipated reading about my long-lost friend, ULTIMA UNDERWORLD, thinking that finally it would get the respect it deserved, the true "mark of the dawn of first-person shooters." ULTIMA UNDERWORLD, way ahead of its time, would make its way out of the woodwork and land the biggest surprise in the gaming community.

Obviously, the gaming experts at CGW have the knowledge and experience to know quality when they see it, and are aware enough not to be persuaded by popularity or money, but instead review the facts, and write consistent and thorough editorials on the demographics of the technology and the business. Poor CASTLE WOLFENSTEIN "3D" would finally be shown who the real winner was.

It was with great dismay that I didn't even see the words *Ultima* and *Underworld* next to each other, anywhere in the entire issue or in the article "The History of Computer Gaming." Unbelievable. How could this king be overlooked?

ULTIMA UNDERWORLD deserves the recognition, even though it didn't win the popularity contest (sound like high school to you?). Bring it back. Bring back history. The true emperor, the true seed of technological progression in the history of computer gaming demands to be commemorated!

William A. Johnsen, Ph.D.

ULTIMA UNDERWORLD is indeed one of the landmarks of computer gaming, and is a long-time member of our esteemed Hall of Fame. We couldn't mention every single great game in that feature, but that doesn't mean we didn't love that game too.

Game/Art/Culture

I just finished reading your article in the February CGW regarding the work of artist Jon Haddock. I want to thank you for that outstanding review and for truly understanding his work. It was by far the most intelligent piece written about him, as well as an amazing layout of images.

Thank you for helping to bring Jon's work to the public and the CGW audience.

John Spiak

Curatorial Museum Specialist
Arizona State University Art
Museum
Tempe, Arizona

Wrestle Mania

I would like to say that I am amazed there aren't any wrestling games. I don't mean that sissy professional wrestling nonsense, but real wrestling,

like college wrestling. Even "sports" like bowling and pool have a game, but men's oldest sport doesn't even have a game. I can understand how it would be hard to make wrestling into a game, but there are some pretty smart programmers out there that I bet could figure it out.

Jeff Massie

Any game that features men rolling around on the ground together, groping and sweating, is a game that we will embrace.

Did we say that out loud?

COSSACKS and Tom's Sister's Boyfriend

Have you guys totally missed COSSACKS EUROPEAN WARS? I mean, I've never played a game this good. AGE OF EMPIRES 2 should change its name to COSSACKS BITCH. My sister's boyfriend comes over so much to play that I have to sleep on the couch. So with all that said, I think you should do a preview on the game — like really soon, 'cause my subscription is running out. Maybe if you guys mention something about it then I'll renew, because I really haven't been seeing much interesting material in your magazine lately.

Tom R.
Brooklyn, NY

What we want to know is this: Why do you have to sleep on the couch when your sister's boyfriend plays games at your house? Where do you normally sleep? We're losing sleep ourselves trying to figure this one out. So no COSSACKS preview until you explain yourself.

Wesley? Isn't That a Girl's Name?

Dear Mr. Babler,

I spit in your general direction. Your unfair review of the name Wesley is a travesty [March 2001, page 112]. Wesley is a great name, and it is used by many celebrities: Wes Craven, Wesley Snipes, and *Star Trek's* Wesley Crusher. Wesley is even a greater name when you shorten it to Wes. It's easy to write, it sounds foreign, and it allows you to type your full name into high-score lists. Now that you are aware of these facts, I shall await your groveling apology.

Wesley Carroll

P.S. Jello Biafra in 2004!

Jason Babler responds: Sorry to offend you, Wussley.

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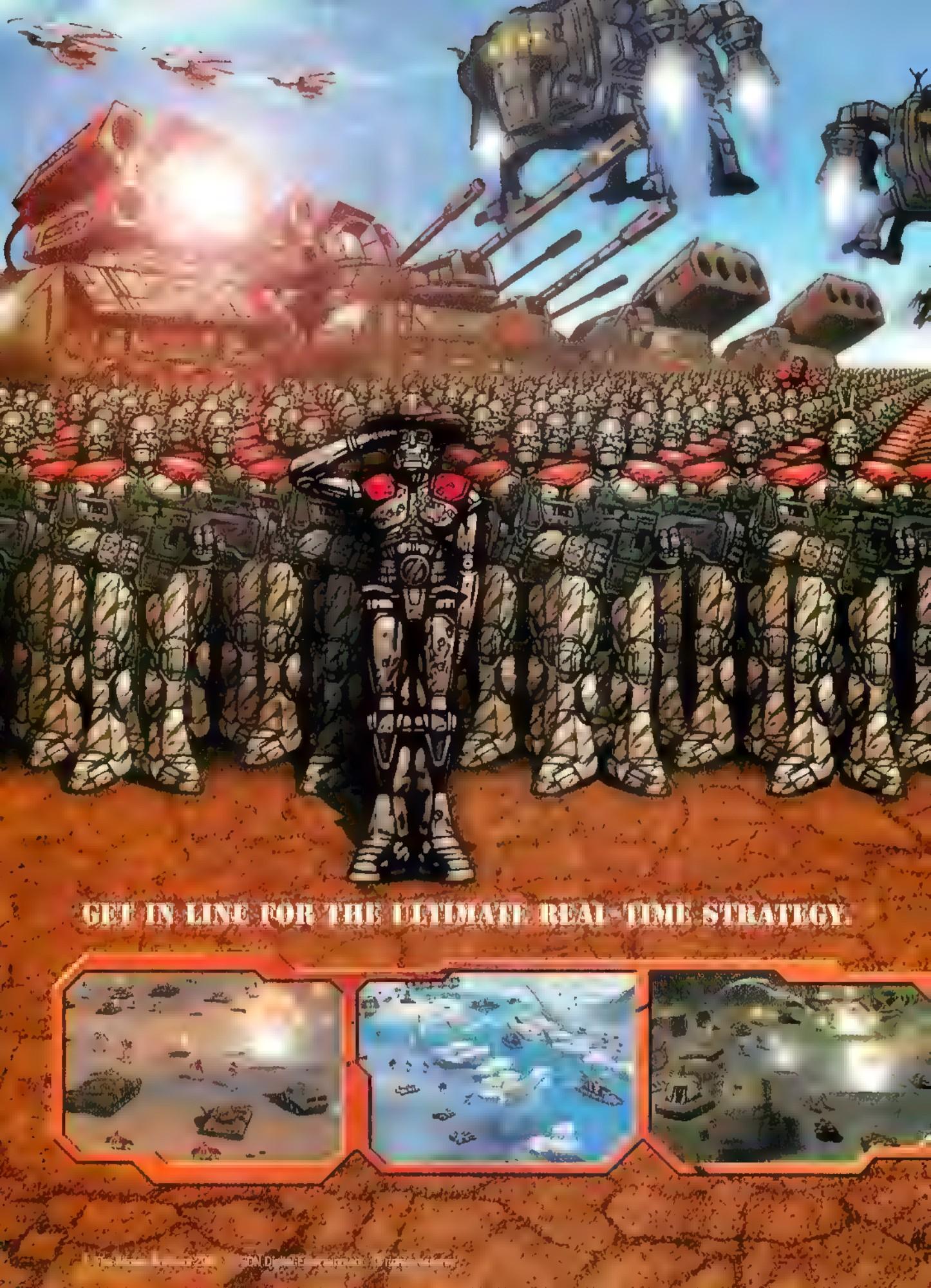


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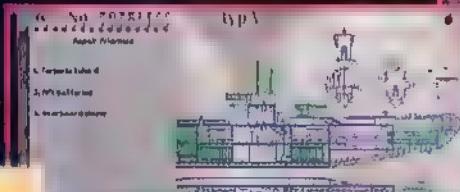
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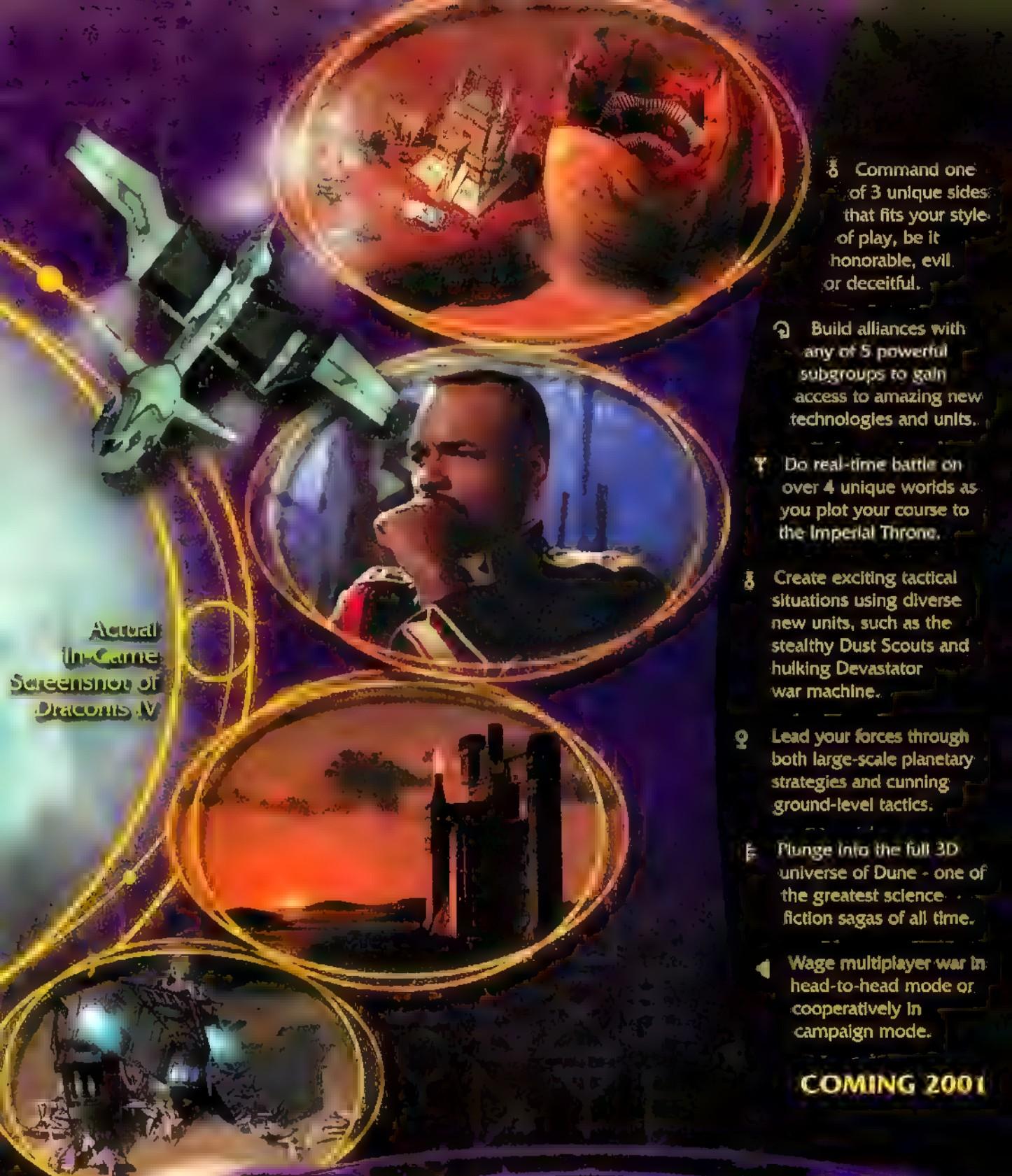


Blood
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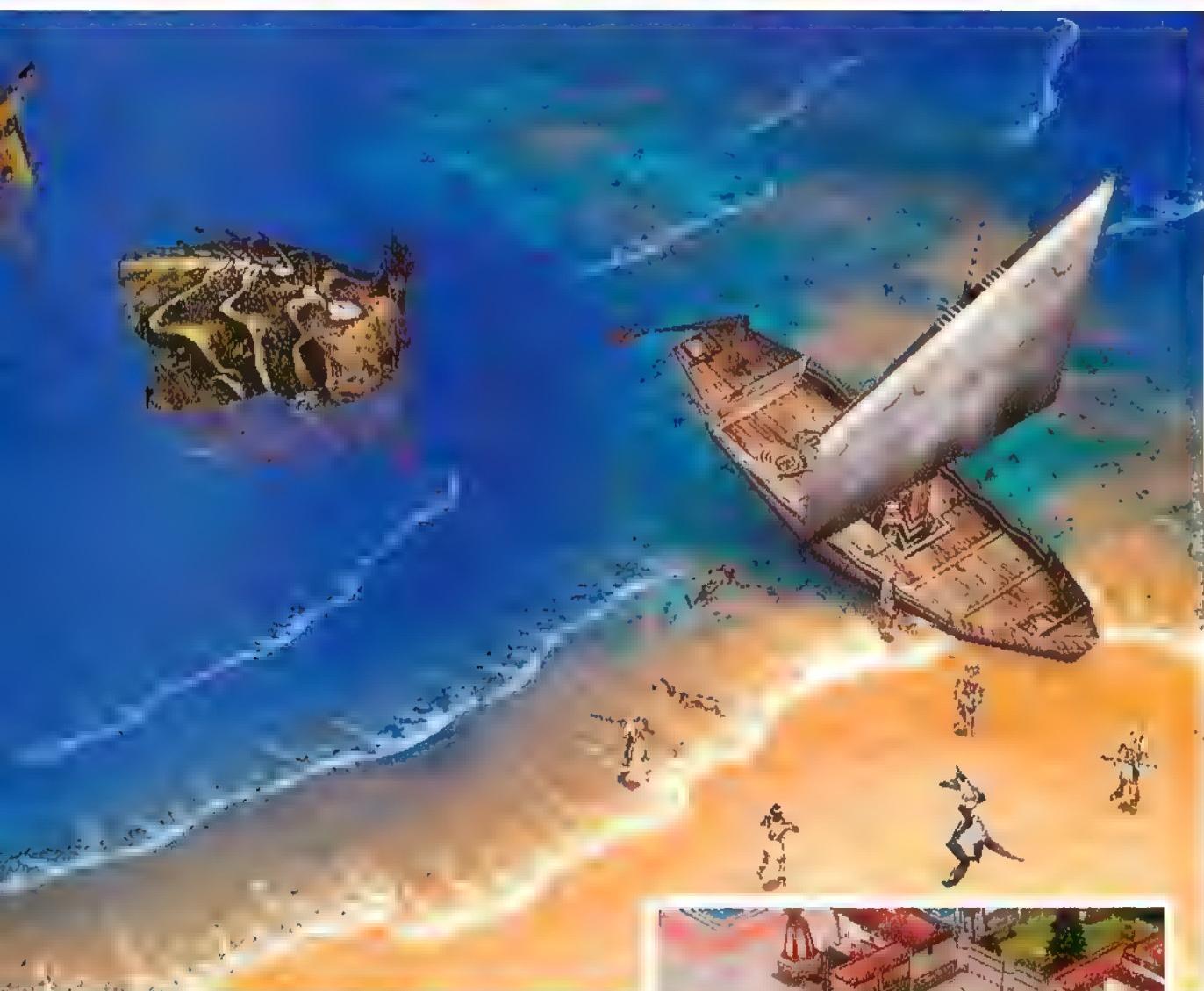
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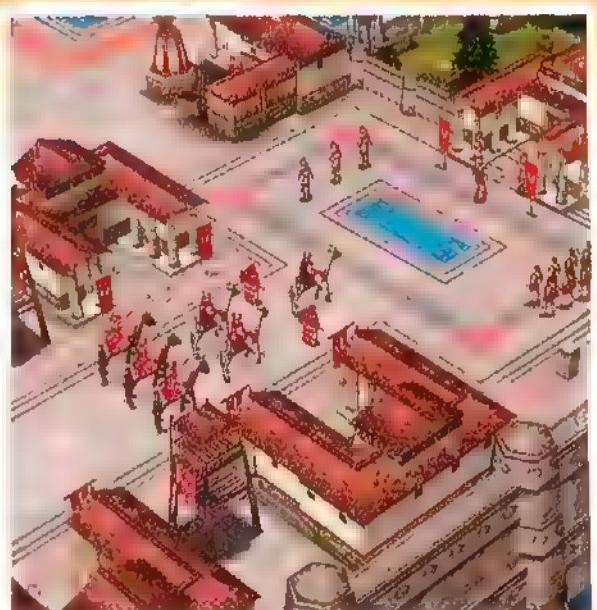


The Coming Age

■■■ How will Ensemble Studios top its award-winning AGE OF EMPIRES II? That's a fine question, one Ensemble itself has been struggling with for over a year. Well, they're about to tell us. Next month, Ensemble opens its tunic and gives us a close look at their first 3D game. They don't have a name or even a publisher yet, but who cares? Let's talk about what we *do* know.

According to Ensemble, the game is set in a period "long ago, when legend and myth were real, an age of mythology. Humans and their heroes have won the struggle for world dominance against other claimants, but one dominant culture has yet to emerge. The gods and their minions are still meddling, attempting to favor one group over another. Players are the guiding spirits of one civilization, employing their heroes, their cultural resources, the favor of their gods, and rare fantastic creatures to dominate the world."

Sounds good to us. Next month we'll bring you all the details, along with an interview with design legend Bruce Shelley. If you want to see where strategy gaming is going, don't miss it.



Aquanox

■■■ Here's a pleasant surprise. With virtually every underwater-based game dredging up the soggy hokum of Atlantis and pods upon pods of godawful philosophic genius dolphins, we were more than happy to hear about Massive Entertainment's action-oriented AQUANOX. These GeForce 3-powered screenshots made us giddy as helium-sucking schoolboys.

Gameplay is still sketchy, but AQUANOX seems to be shaping up like a deep-sea WING COMMANDER/PRIVATEER, with players cast as a mercenary earning cash to purchase a variety of upgrades for their zippy submarines. You'll explore underwater cities and enormous reefs, battling a contingent of hideous creatures and ancient gods displaced from deep-sea caverns by humankind's briny new civilization. Captain Nemo never had it so good.



Black Isle Studios: TORN

■■■ Big news for RPG geeks! As we went to press, Interplay's Black Isle Studios, the current kings of the genre, gave us the scoop on their next title. Now titled BLACK ISLE STUDIOS: TORN, the game will be their first non *Dungeons and Dragons* RPG since FALLOUT, and it's their first in 3D, using the LithTech 3.0 engine. The game will be set in its own fantasy world, featuring four realms of magic and a skill-based character system. Look for our exclusive preview next month, and in the meantime, drool over this artwork, elf-boy!



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Shooting Blanks

Proposed restrictions on M-rated software ads raise new concerns about censorship. By Sandy Brant

CAUTION CAU

The subject of violence in gaming shot back to the fore earlier this year, with two seemingly contradictory developments. In late January, the Surgeon General's office released a landmark study concluding that media influences (TV, movies, and games) play a low role in contributing to youth violence. The report, which was undertaken as a result of the 1999 Columbine High School shooting, said media violence plays no role at all in "late-onset" violence (children whose record of violent crime begins in adolescence) and only a minor role in "early-onset" cases (violent behavior before the age of 11).

The Surgeon General's report scored some points, but it didn't knock out any of the major players. Outspoken legislators such as Senators Sam Brownback (R-Kansas) and Joseph Lieberman (D-Connecticut) continue to point to a report from last September from the Federal Trade Commission criticizing the entertainment industry for marketing material with mature content to children. Lieberman has been working toward expanding the FTC's regulatory powers over advertising for R-rated movies and M-rated games. Fearing new regulation, the Motion Picture Association of America and the gaming industry are grap-

pling with more drastic means of self-regulation.

The International Digital Software Association (IDSA) is working on a proposal that would impose more restrictions on game advertising. IDSA, comprised of more than 30 of the biggest publishers in the U.S., proposes banning M-rated game advertisements in all media—magazine, TV, and Internet—where at least 45 percent of the audience is deemed 17 years old or younger. The Entertainment Software Rating Board (ESRB), which rates games, already has an Advertising Review Council that enforces voluntary ad restrictions, but IDSA wants to take things further. (See



"Somewhere along the line, we need to find some testicles and start making the case for why the censors are completely off base."

—Greg Costikyan, game designer

The GOOD...

STAR WARS: BATTLEGROUND

LucasArts has announced a new series of real-time strategy games set in the *Star Wars* universe and powered by technology from Ensemble Studios (AGE OF EMPIRES). The



Star Wars: Battleground, will be a 2D game using Ensemble's very own ABE engine, with

design input from the legendary Bruce Shelley. Between this series and the game being called RTS III (see Hot-Shots), Ensemble is definitely on a roll.

the BAD...

DOTCOM CARNAGE

The Grim Reaper has claimed two more gaming websites for the digital wrecker: Gamecenter and Gamers.com. The first was shut down



following CNET's acquisition of Gamecenter. The second was a victim of falling ad revenue and founder Dennis "Thrash" Feng's mismanagement. But economic realities have forced many popular websites to lay off staff and do more with less. From a "dinosauc" to an endangered species: welcome to the "club."

and the UGLY

GRAVEYARD CHRONICLES

The latest round of PC games to be taken out and shot include EA's THE WORLD IS NOT ENOUGH and Myths Games' DREAMLAND CHRONICLES: FREEDOM RIDGE. TWINE'S cancellation wasn't a huge disappointment; it owed more to internal problems than PC malaise.

FREEDOM RIDGE was a different story; it would have translated X-COM to a beautiful 3D world. We would happily sacrifice die-hard editor Alex Handly atop a volcano if it meant this game could be finished.



sidebar, page 31)

According to advertising executives, three console gaming publications could be affected: Gamepro, PSM (*the Unofficial PlayStation Magazine*), and Expert Gamer (published by Ziff Davis Media, which also publishes CGW).

John Rousseau, president and publisher of IDG's Gamepro magazine, thinks the proposal is a step in the wrong direction. He says the proposal represents a kind of "demographic profiling [which] is a dangerous precedent for any business, not just our industry."

Rousseau prefers a different approach. "We propose a system where mature-rated game ads should be suitable for all ages," he says. "similar to what the movie industry does with previews. We should be working much more to educate parents and our retail partners so kids that want to play M-rated titles can do so with their parents' permission."

Editors seem no more enamored of IDSA's proposal than Rousseau. John Davison, the editor-

in-chief of *The Official PlayStation Magazine*, says advertisers can find ways around the restrictions. Ad blitzes often begin before a game is finished, he says, but the proposal won't affect games tagged RP, for Rating Pending. "There is a question as to whether this is open to a certain degree of manipulation," he says.

Whether advertised or not, Davison says, M-rated games will still be covered editorially. "If the reason a game is M-rated is gratuitous and makes the whole thing suck, we tell our readers—that's what we're here for," he states. "The more ignorant observers of this industry think we're constantly wallowing in a pit of wanton depravity, advocating violence to children and peddling our smut to the innocents."

If so, we're wallowing in smut created by a mere 7 percent of games, according to statistics from the ESRB. Davison points out that a lot of money comes from that 7 percent, but it's not because of gory advertising. A popular series will sell regardless of whether publishers advertise in the specialist press. Rousseau agrees that Mature-rated games are a small part of his business. And if, as Rousseau asserts, ads for Mature games are already monitored and frequently turned away, why is the IDSA so worried? The proposal spells it out: "We simply cannot have a credible self-regulatory regime that does not create some objective standards gov-

continued on page 30

Reality Check

	CGW	PC Gamer	CGM	Adrenaline Vault	GameSpot	Game Rankings
B-17 Superfortress II	D	B+	B+	B	B+	B+
EverQuest: Scars of Velious	A	C+	A	B+	*	B+
Freedom: First Resistance	F	D	F	D-	D	D+
Ghosts: Citizen Kabuto	A	B	C	A	B+	A-
Hitman: Code 47	C-	B	D	C-	B-	B
Project IGI	C	D+	C	B	C	B-
Quake III: Team Arena	C-	C+	B-	B-	B-	B-
Starfleet Command II	C	B-	B-	B	B+	B
Timeline	F	D-	F	D	C	D
Tomb Raider Chronicles	B-	C	C-	C	C	C

We've made some changes this month. We've replaced the now defunct GameCenter with Adrenaline Vault (we wish them better luck in the "deemed column" formerly occupied by PC Games, Inktalk PC, and PC Accelerator). We've also replaced the CGW Average with the GameRankings average. GameRankings.com collects rating data from just about every magazine and website, and averages them all out. As you can see, we're doing our part to lower those averages across the board. * indicates game has not been rated.

The Surgeon General's Report

After the FTC's findings last September, which condemned advertising for violent movies and video games directed at minors, South Carolina Attorney General Charles Condon sent a letter to all the state attorneys general urging a class action lawsuit against the entertainment industry.

He wrote, "Hollywood has set a trap for our youth and springs it every day with a new movie, a new game, or a new CD, each more explicit and violent than the last. Just like tobacco, nothing will be done, no change in irresponsible behavior will occur, until we see Hollywood executives inside a courtroom."

What would Condon think about the latest Surgeon General's report on youth violence, released on January 17? Surgeon General Dr. David Satcher told CNN, "In the report, while we point out that exposure to violence in the media — especially television — can significantly increase aggressive behavior in youth it is not a major long-term factor in violent behavior."

Game designer Greg Costikyan found the report beside the point. "To talk about what the study proves, or does not prove, is not central to the debate. The real question is: To what degree can and should government be permitted to regulate the content of media, entertainment or otherwise?"

"Defining the effects of violence in media on children as a 'public health issue' moves it from a politicized cultural debate into the realm of law enforcement. The authorities have the power to take draconian measures to enforce public health standards [when they get in the mindset of] 'We must save our children from the greedy panderers who want them to live in a blood-soaked, ultraviolent world!'"

Dr. Henry Jenkins agrees. "The pathologization of taste, displacing cultural differences onto medical and social problems, justifies censorship. We've shown a tendency to take extreme measures to eradicate a menace."

"The Surgeon General's report was very balanced. I'd love to believe that the report would put an end to the controversy—but politicians listen to their constituency, and their constituency doesn't listen to research or facts. If it did, this would have ended 30 years ago."



continued from page 29



“It’s not about protecting the young; it’s about controlling the young.”

—Henry Jenkins, Ph.D.
Director of Comparative Media Studies, MIT

erning what constitutes improper target marketing... Failure to proceed will make IDSA very vulnerable, both politically and from a regulatory standpoint." Translation: if the industry doesn't chasten itself, Congress might do the honors.

Political Expediency

Game designer and parent Greg Costikyan doesn't like what the proposal portends. "All the regulations do is prevent you from advertising QUAKE III in the pages of Marvel Comics or *Seventeen*," he says, "which is no great loss. The greater risk is that this is only the beginning, and we'll be faced with more and more restrictive rules, desperately adopted."

"Somewhere along the line, we need to find some testicles," Costikyan says, "and start making the case for why the censors are completely off base."

That case could be powerful. Most people buying games are 18 years or older, according to IDSA's own research. Rousseau points out that restricting game advertising content will barely impact the amount of real violence kids are exposed to every day. And of course, there's the newly released data from the Surgeon General (see sidebar at left).

But politicians are susceptible to assumptions, and they look for easy targets. "The proposal plays to stereotypes of what politicians *think* young people are reading," says Professor Henry Jenkins, director of comparative media studies at MIT. "Senators like Sam Brownback love to wave a magazine in the air and say it's aimed at young people, when in fact most of the people reading it are over 18. Same goes for games."

"It's politically convenient to ignore those statistics, and it's easier than dealing with the real, substantive issues behind youth violence."

“Cultural Pollution”

Jenkins is deeply distrustful of those who seek to limit media access. "It's not about protecting the young, it's about controlling the young," he says, adding that attacks on media are often thinly veiled attacks on the people who create it. He says terms like "cultural pollution" and "media violence" are code words that convey a message to dangerous parts of society: "We, the government, are keeping an eye on you, the menace, because we don't like you and don't understand what you're doing."

There is hope. "Gradually we become acclimated to the media and its presence, after multiple generations of users," Jenkins says. "Sometimes we have to wait for a new media to displace the old as the source of anxiety."

Meanwhile, the congressional debates continue, and the prospect of further regulation grows. While the gaming industry scurries about, crying "we're working on it," Costikyan doesn't like what he's hearing.

"The industry has largely behaved like a passel of poltroons, cringing, offering 'better ratings' and pre-censorship of advertising to assuage the fears of the ignorant. This does not set a good precedent," he says. "For the record, I find a lot of violent games repulsive, and I've written about the loathsomeness of some game advertising. It's not a bad thing for publishers to think twice about these issues." But he doesn't think someone should impose restrictions on them.

Jenkins disagrees. "The industry is its own worst enemy, advertising bathtubs full of blood, and chainsaw-wielding maniacs," he says. "The ads are much more violent than the games. Industry representatives must get tired of watching Congress wave those ads around, so it's understandable

that the industry is trying to control advertising itself. As long as it's self-regulation, it's not necessarily harmful."

"But where is the line drawn? When will Congress stop holding that gun to the gaming industry's head?" Jenkins asks. "Frankly, I think the politicians are getting too much mileage out of this to stop now." **CGW**

(*Expert Gamer*, *The Official PlayStation Magazine*, and *Computer Gaming World* are all published by Ziff Davis Media.)

15

May 1986

"This reviewer is not normally an adventure game aficionado," Assistant Editor Bill Omer wrote back then.

"However, I liked *AUTODUEL* quite a bit. An instant classic that fused *Mad Max* into gamers' heads, *AUTODUEL* allowed you to play the game as a vehicular courier, mercenary, or gladiator." Also covered in this issue: the third annual CGW computer baseball draft, a time-honored tradition that still remains today. Unfortunately, baseball roundups are most these days, given that only two titles—*HIGH HEAT* and *TRIPLE PLAY*—exist.



10

May 1991

Ten years ago the dynamic design duo of Sid Meier and Bruce Shelley (*CIVILIZATION*) had just completed

a spy game called *COVERT ACTION*. Reviewer Charles Ardai wrote, "It is no exaggeration to say that MicroProse has released the richest treatment of espionage ever put in a computer game."



Monkey See, Monkey Do?

Here's how the new proposal compares with existing guidelines from the Entertainment Software Ratings Board.

ESRB Advertising Review Council Principles

1. An advertisement must accurately reflect the nature and content of the product it represents and the rating issued.
2. An advertisement must not glamorize or exploit the ESRB rating of a product.
3. All advertisements must be created with a sense of responsibility to the public.
4. No advertisement can contain content likely to cause serious or widespread offense to the average consumer.

IDSA's Proposed Advertising Rules

1. No advertisements for M rated games in magazines where 45 percent or more of the readers are under 17, based on circulation audits.
2. No advertisements for M-rated games on

television programs where 35 percent or more of the viewers are under 17, based on National Nielsen data.

3. No paid advertisements for M-rated games on websites where 45 percent or more of the visitors are under 17, measured by Media Matrix.

Demographic measurements would be valid for a year. The proposal would also prohibit cross promotions if one company's products might reach a "substantial audience" that is under 17 years old. "We have eliminated the 45 percent standard [for cross promotions] because we felt it would be impossible to collect data and it would therefore impose an unreasonable burden on companies," the proposal explains.

Action figures wouldn't escape the scarlet letter, either. Or letters, in this case—the packaging of any licensed product based on a Mature or Teen game must state, "This [item] is based on a [Mature or Teen] rated video game."

First Look at

DOOM III

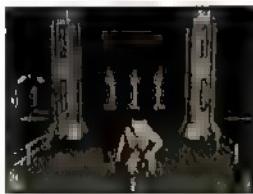


Steve Jobs and John Carmack shocked the hell out of the gaming community in February by debuting DOOM III at the Macworld Expo in Tokyo. Carmack, lead programmer at id Software, announced that the game would make heavy use of nVidia's GeForce 3, which he called "the most exciting thing in years that we've had to work with."

The reason for Carmack's enthusiasm was obvious. The demo's mind-blowing real-time visuals are on a par with 3D-rendered artwork. Carmack said the GeForce 3 allows "really dramatic things, [like] specular highlights on a per-pixel basis. Every light casts its own highlight, every surface casts a shadow — just the way you would expect things to behave in the real world. We can bring cinematic drama to a lot of things in the game now. We can do these extremely moody and intense and scary things."

Jobs' interest in having Carmack show off DOOM III is noteworthy. In an era when a 400MHz machine can handle most applications, sluggish computer sales have hit the Macintosh especially hard. It's clear that Apple has turned its attention to technology

that may motivate consumers to buy more powerful systems. Those machines won't be cheap, with the GeForce 3 alone adding \$600 to a system's price. But it's a price Mac gamers may be willing to pay to get breakout games like id's next shooter.—Ken Brown and Alex Handy



5

May 1996

The *QUAKE* technology demo is out and it's pretty good, we understand in 1996.

Interestingly, the cover story in May 1996 was on a *CIVILIZATION*-type game: Accolade's

DEADLOCK, which went on to good reviews but minimal sales. Worst pun of the month: "Al Carumba," in that same story. Worst decision of the month: our 16-page PlayStation special section. Readers hated it.



News & Notes

Online Game to Support War Games Cable Show

TBS Superstation has partnered with WildTangent to produce a real-time strategy game to complement TBS's show, *War Games*. The 2-hour series premiere, scheduled for March 28th, features film footage of actual U.S. military maneuvers including dog-fights, submarine warfare, and "live fire exercises," according to TBS.

WildTangent's online game, **VIRTUAL WARFARE**, is a COMMAND & CONQUER-style real-time-strategy game accessible to anyone with a dial-up connection.

Users command a squadron of military units, including armored vehicles, tanks, and helicopters. (The game will not model individual soldiers, which TBS evidently considered too controversial.)

Players can lead six different missions including attacking entrenched enemy forces, capturing a chemical weapons facility and defending an airfield.

High scorers can win new computers, PlayStation 2s, DVD players, or other prizes. For more information, see: tbssuperstation.com/movies/som/index.htm.



WarCraft III's Final Four

Blizzard has at last finalized the set of playable races in **WARCRAFT III: REIGN OF CHAOS**. Scheduled for release later this year but more likely to be shipped sometime after humans evolve to a state of pure energy, the design team has purged the race set of the Demons. While this may disappoint the Aleister Crowley crowd, it should help play-balancing of the final races: Night Elves, Undead, Orcs, and Humans.

From Celluloid to Silicon

Interplay Entertainment and Shiny Entertainment coughed up enough cash to bring home the coveted games license for the hit film **The Matrix**. No details have been released, and indeed it's unlikely that Shiny has even built a development team yet for its first *Matrix* game.

The Dark Horizons website reports that EA and Origin have approved a film version of Origin's classic **CRUSADER: NO REMORSE**. The game, about a genetically engineered soldier who turns on his creators, was a popular action title that depicted shocking animated violence for its day. Dark Horizons reports that former stage writer turned film scribe Robin Marlow has finished the script, and believes 20th Century Fox may be interested in picking it up.

Variety reports that Infogrames may acquire the rights to make games based on upcoming *Terminator* movies. According to the magazine, Ocean previously owned the rights to make games based on the first two *Terminator* movies. Infogrames acquired Ocean in 1996 and has been working to restructure Ocean's deal to get the rights to games based on *Terminator 3*—starring Arnold Schwarzenegger, directed by John McTiernan, and planned for release next year—as well as a possible *Terminator 4* movie. **CGW**



Blizzard Sues Over Diablo: The Movie

Blizzard Entertainment filed a trademark infringement suit against New Line Cinema over potential confusion with a film of the same name currently in production at the studio, starring *Pitch Black's* Vin Diesel (right). The suit claims that New Line is trying to exploit the success of Blizzard's games as a way to promote its own film. Blizzard said it also intends to produce a film called *Diablo*, based on its best-selling game property. The suit notes Blizzard owns a trademark for a *Diablo* movie and has a trademark application pending for a movie called *Diablo II: Salvation*.

Tchotchke of the Month



No other trinket in the annals of CGW tchotchke-dom ever generated the rapidly escalating level of disgust that this seemingly innocuous keychain bundled with *IN COLD BLOOD* did. The conversation went a little like this.

"Look, someone sent us some stupid keychain. How lame is that?"

"Dude, that thing looks like a silver suppository!"

"Yuck! I touched it!"

"Wait it opens up and, and—"

"Oh my God! It's a crack vial!"

"And it's empty! Sweet Lord above, have they no shame?"

At the risk of seeming like old fogeys, we have to draw the line somewhere—please, when bribing us with drug paraphernalia, have the sense to include some actual drugs. Would you give a second-grader a radio-controlled truck for Christmas but forget the batteries? No, we didn't think so.

Dark Age of Camelot

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www.darkageofcamelot.com



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An epic awaits...

Live the Legend

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 2. KILL FOUL BEASTS
 3. UNRAVEL TANGLED QUEST
 4. MASSACRE ENEMY
 5. SUMMON GIANT
 6. END ENEMY CAMP

MYTHIC
ENTERTAINMENT

ABANDON
ENTERTAINMENT



REALITY CONNECTION REUNITE

The CGW Mix

What's driving us to distraction.

ICEWIND DALE: HEART OF WINTER

Just when we thought we were out, they pull us back in. The ICEWIND DALE, HEART OF WINTER expansion has us smacking frosty wights all over again. If they ship that BALDUR'S GATE II expansion any time soon, there's a real risk we may spend the entire year marching through one Black Isle epic after another. —Coffey

DAY OF DEFEAT

Nothing can quench our thirst for COUNTER-STRIKE like



ALL YOUR BASE ARE BELONG TO US

A badly translated "English" video game intro has now become the "Whassuuuuupppp!" of the gaming community. Something about the clipped, nonsensical prose of the 1989 Sega Genesis game ZERO WING ("Somebody set up us the bomb") induced people to embed the phrase into pictures and create music videos like the one by The Laziest Men on Mars. The Flash site was such an instant hit it made appearances in *Time*, *Loveline*, and the *San Francisco Chronicle*. You're probably sick of it already, but to that, we answer, "Move ZIG! For Great Justice!" —Scooter



CLIVE BARKER'S UNDYING

Not since SYSTEM SHOCK 2 has a game given me the heebie-jeebies like UNDYING. I can't play with headphones on anymore — Tom Pro loves to sneak up behind me and whisper, "Are you dyyyyyyyyyyyyy ng?" and other creepy stuff, and then watch as I jump out of my chair. This could be the best horror game that's come out in the last two years. —Babier

MTV'S JACKASS

What is there not to like about a show where guys beat up their fathers and wallow in various flavors of feces? We're hard-pressed to come up with an answer, too. The MTV show, hosted by Johnny Knoxville, also has a unique appeal in that would-be jackasses across America are lighting themselves on fire — like Knoxville did — and, hopefully, thinning the proverbial herd. —O'Neal



Arrested Development

Kent State cops seize gamer's PC

On Super Bowl Sunday, a Kent State University ResNet website suddenly linked to Bled for Days, a StarCraft clan page with the usual "death to our enemies" Battle.net hit lists.

"Let me just say right now that this was not done on purpose," says Adam Heckman, aka {BfD}MidKnight. "NOT ON PURPOSE."

"Though anything is possible," says chief ResNet admin David Futey, "your upload generally defaults to the server you downloaded the site information from unless a redirect is made."

The upload was allegedly made from the dorm room of Matt Wilcox or {BfD}(F)akk2, by classmate John Burkle. Later that week, Kent State cops busted Wilcox's room, confiscating computer-related items. Campus police somehow interpreted "computer-related" to include a purse, 50 burned CDs, and 3 bottles of alcohol.

Patrick Barnes, {BfD}GraffitiX420, says, "If the cops had done their homework, they wouldn't have raided Matt's room. I got in trouble last semester doing things on the computer I shouldn't have. Matt's idea of shutting down his computer is kicking it until the light goes off." The clan blames the hit list for the crackdown.

Threatened by a scarecrow freedom of speech issue, the gaming community at large spattered the Web with cries of foul play. But as Futey pointed out, "A content issue was not the reason for the investigation. Defacing websites is a felony."

The investigation continues. Wilcox, unavailable for comment, won't be able to kick his computer again for several months. —Sandy Brundage

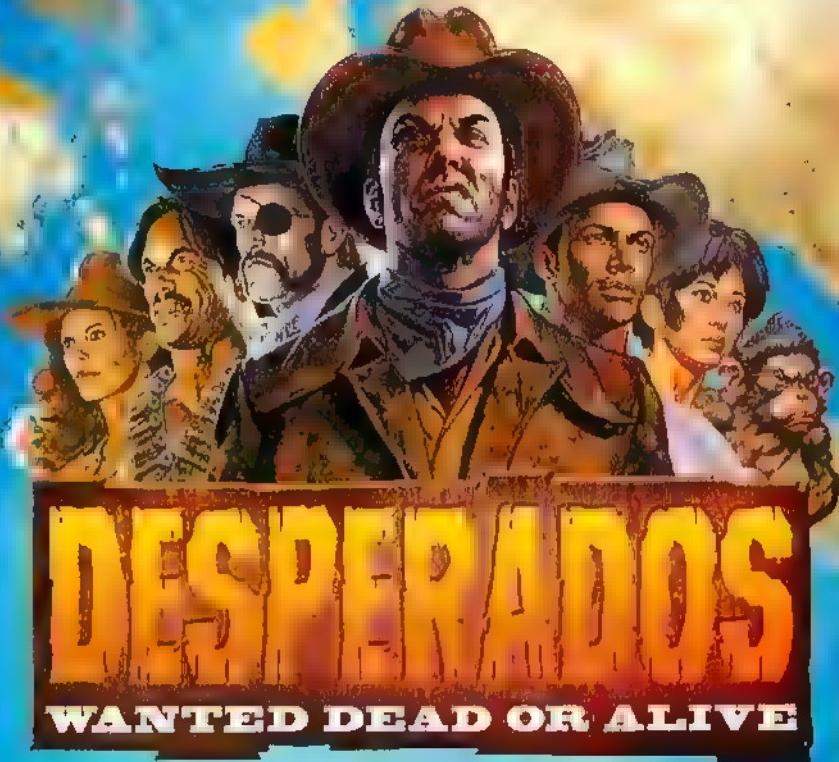
Top 10 Reasons Why DUKE NUKEM FOREVER Is So Late...

10. New publisher Gathering of Developers insists on adding Catholic schoolgirls to the game.
 9. 3DRealms is waiting for secure Internet transactions so players can throw real money at strippers.
 8. The developers are having trouble getting to work because alien bastards keep shooting up their rides.
 7. It's not called "DUKE NUKEM ANYTIME SOON," okay?
 6. 3DRealms can't finish the game because they're too busy suing the Duke of Edinburgh, Duke University, and anyone with a dog named Duke for trademark infringement.
 5. They're waiting for Carmack to invent time travel so they can change name to 4DRealms.
 4. New and improved Duke needs to undergo sensitivity training to get in touch with his feminine side.
 3. 3DRealms is waiting for Bruce Campbell and Sam Raimi to do another *Evil Dead* movie so they can swipe some more dialogue.
 2. John Romero is rumored to be consulting on the project, and you know what that means.
- And the number one reason why DUKE NUKEM FOREVER is so late is...*
1. Hey, give them a break! They're still trying to finish PREY

—Mark Asher



Infogrames and Spellbound Present



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the enemy.



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ghost towns and steamboats to
gold mines and swamps.



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PIPELINE

Software development is an inexact science, and in this economy, God knows what developers are going back to database programming next month! These dates represent the best available info we had at press time. If you're a publisher, send your update to updates@readme.com.

Updates

ASHERON'S CALL 2: Microsoft revealed that Turbine's been working on an updated engine for the last year. Much of the design remains to be done, but we'll let you know when we hear more.



ARCANUM: It's now officially feature-locked. That means no more tweaks to design or anything involving gameplay; it's all about bugs, bugs, and more bugs. The end is near, hopefully.

CAC RENEGADE: Like Arcanum, the design team announced that they have finalized the features and will focus solely on QA testing.

DUNGEON MILITIA:

DUNE: Same as above. Westwood must be working hard given the progress with both titles.

HALO: The last status update

about Halo focuses mostly on technical issues. A lot of bugs were fixed, and some quirky technology has been refined (such as the animation system). The only gameplay-related news is the fact that they've been tweaking the hell out of the AI.



METROPOLIS ONLINE: Electronic Arts recently reiterated its commitment to the game, saying you'll have a persistent, online car; the focus is still muscle cars

from the '30s to the '70s.

PLANETSIDE: The team has reached a major milestone in that they have an internally playable build. They're hammering on this build by setting up Deathmatch games and having the servers run them 24/7. It's still a long ways off, but at least they can get a start on gameplay balancing and network architecture. Watch for a detailed preview next month.



AGE OF WONDERS II: THE WIZARD'S THOME EDITION:

ALONE IN THE DARK: THE NEW NIGHTMARE Interplay

ANARCHRONIC EDEN:

ARCANUM SIEGE:

ASHERON'S CALL 2 MUD:

BATTLE REALMS Grove Entertainment

KATTELCRUSIER MILLENIUM 3DO/64/PS

COMMAND & CONQUER: REVENGE Westwood

COMMANDOS 2 Eidos

DEATHREAPER COMMAND GAMES:

DEUS EX 2 Ionsoft

DIABLO II: LORD OF DESTRUCTION Blizzard

DRAGON'S LAIR 3D Blue Byte

DUKE NUKEM FOREVER 3D Reeltime

DUNE DREAMCATCHER Interplay

DUNGEON STAGE Microsoft

EARTH & BEYOND Westwood

ELDER SCROLLS: MORROWIND Bethesda

EMPIRE: BATTLE FOR DUNE Westwood

EMPIRE: EARTH STRIKE

FLASH POINT: STATUS QUO 1988 Nukem Interactive

FLY ZONE 3DO

FREEBIRD FORCE

FREELANCER Microsoft

HATE DRUGS

HARPYEON #1 BANKSY Studios

HOSTILE WATERS: ANTISUBS Interplay

I-12 STUPROVKA Blue Byte

LEGENDA DI MIGHT & MAGIC 3D

MAGIC & MAYHEM 2: THE ART OF MAGIC

MAGISTER EA

MASTERS OF OYZER III: NEXUS Interplay

MAX PAYNE 3DO

MechCommander 2 Microsoft

MEDAL OF HONOR: ALLIED ASSAULT EA

MOTOR CITY ONLINE Electronic Arts

MYST III: ECHOES GAME SPiLTER

MYST III: THE WORLDS 3DO

NEWWINTER NIGHTS Interplay

NUKE: STRATEGY EA

PLANETSIde Verant

POE: POE OF RESILIENCE 3DO

RADIATION 3DO

RETURN TO WOLFENSTEIN

ROBOTECH: GUNNAR'S FATE

ROBOTECH: GUNNAR'S FATE

STAR WARS: CHILL 3DO

SIGMA MICRO

SILENT HUNTER II GAME SPiLTER

THE STATE: DEADLY PONY TA

STAR WARS: ENDER'S GAME

SUPER STAR WARS

SUPER STAR WARS

TERRA FORMATION

TERMINATOR 2: JUDGEMENT DAY

TERMINATOR 2: JUDGEMENT DAY

TERMINATOR 3: RISE OF THE MACHINES

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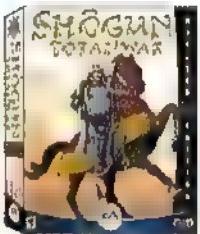
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THIS MONTH'S TOP 5

PREORDERS



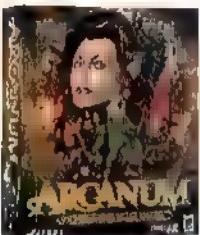
Diablo 2 Expansion: Lord of Destruction (BLIZZARD) You will face a new series of quests and challenges to prevent Baal, the last of the Prime Evils, and his vile minions from destroying the world of Sanctuary by corrupting the Worldstone, which protects the whole mortal plane from the forces of Hell.



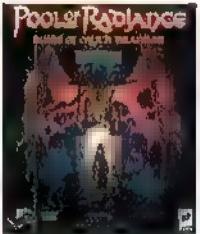
Shogun: Total War Edition (ELECTRONIC ARTS) Contains the complete award-winning Shogun: Total War game, plus two expansion packs: Invasion of the Mongol Horde and Campaigns of the Three Unifiers. These expansion sets include new military units, terrain, buildings, and scenarios.



Myst III: Exile (GAME STUDIOS) Building on the surreal style of *Myst* and *Riven*, *Myst III: Exile* features new fantastical environments that make its predecessors immersive, mysterious and beautiful. *Exile* features five entirely new ages for players to explore and hours of new mysteries to uncover.



Arcanum: Of Steamworks & Magick Obscura (SIERRA STUDIOS) Welcome to the land of Arcanum, where magic and sorcery hold equal sway with technology and science. An adventurer among dwarves, humans, orcs, and elves might just as easily wield a flintlock pistol as a flaming sword.



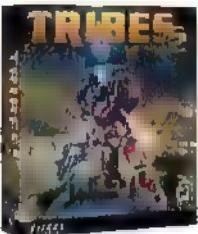
Pool of Radiance: Ruins of Myth Drannor (GAME STUDIOS) The first game to incorporate the new 3rd edition D&D rules, features new races and offers new class abilities, spells, and heroic feats. Your journey back into the Forgotten Realms promises to never offer the same experience twice.

THIS MONTH'S TOP 5

RELEASES



Black & White (ELECTRONIC ARTS) A role-playing game unlike any other you've played before. You play the role of a deity in a land where the surroundings are yours to shape and its people are yours to lord over. Your actions decide whether you create a heaven or hell for your worshippers.



Tribes 2 (SIERRA STUDIOS) The ultimate team-based experience, set in breathtaking worlds where brainpower and teamwork are the only true keys to survival. Unprecedented innovations in teamplay and tactical warfare will summon your intellect and gaming prowess in unimaginable ways.



Evil Dead: Hell to the King (THQ) Ash must once again attempt to save the world from an appalling and horrific end. Survival horror genre is taken to new heights by combining the successful formula of suspense, action, and puzzle-solving with over-the-top bloodlust and signature humor.



Star Trek: Away Team (ACTIVISION) You are in charge of an elite group of officers brought together to take care of the Federation's dirty laundry. Your unit will consist of 22 characters, each with a unique expertise. It's your to choose the 3 to 6 officers needed to complete each of the 18 missions.



Fallout Tactics: Brotherhood of Steel (INTERPLAY) A squad-based tactical combat game set in the *Fallout* universe and serves as a side story to the series' ongoing continuity. Features many systems native to the series, which will no doubt please those hungering for another postapocalyptic romp.

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Handy Stats

by
Alex "Muppethead" Handy

About 50

Number of German soldiers Eddie Murphy killed or wounded January 26, 1945, for which he was awarded the Medal of Honor.

56

Number of bad guys you can kill in the first level of **SOLDIER OF FORTUNE**.

20

Number of bugs allowed by the USDA per 100 grams of canned mushrooms.

25

Number of bugs allowed by Interplay per copy of **MESSIAH**. [Source: **MESSIAH** patches 1.1 and 0.2.]

589

Number of bugs allowed by Microsoft per copy of Windows NT 4.0. (Most of these bugs are now "features" in Windows 2000.) [Source: Microsoft's NT 4.0 Service Pack website.]

15 million

Triangles per second a GeForce 256 can draw on your screen.

20 million

Triangles per second a PlayStation 2 can draw on your screen.

150 million

Triangles per second a GeForce 3 can draw on your screen.

60

Percent of the last Handy Stats actually written by Handy.

2

Number of readers who actually read the last Handy Stats.

Top 20

The best in gaming, as voted by gamers

- 1 Diablo II (Blizzard)
- 2 Baldur's Gate II (Interplay)
- 3 Age of Empires II: Age of Kings (Microsoft)
- 4 Unreal Tournament (Infogrames)
- 5 Age of Empires II: The Conquerors expansion (Microsoft)
- 6 The Sims (EA)
- 7 Command & Conquer: Red Alert 2 (EA)
- 8 Half-Life: Opposing Force (Sierra)
- 9 Deus Ex (Eidos)
- 10 Icewind Dale (Interplay)
- 11 Sid Meier's Alpha Centauri (Firaxis)
- 12 Final Fantasy VII (SquareSoft)
- 13 Heroes of Might & Magic III: Armageddon's Blade (3DO)
- 14 Planescape: Torment (Interplay)
- 15 Baldur's Gate: Tales of the Sword Coast (Interplay)
- 16 No One Lives Forever (Fox Interactive)
- 17 Rainbow Six: Rogue Spear (Ubisoft)
- 18 NHL 2001 (EA)
- 19 Quake III Arena (Activision)
- 20 Command & Conquer: Tiberian Sun (EA)

The CGW Top 20 is an online poll conducted in partnership with Gamespot. Even shut-ins like you can vote! Point your browser to www.computergaming.com, and pick your 10 favorites. We print the 20 highest-scoring games.

The Top 20 is limited to games less than two years old. After two years, games become eligible for the CGW Hall of Fame. Watch next month for the complete Hall of Fame, plus three new inductions.

The Buzz

The reward system [in Everquest] seems to follow – to a T – the two most commonly accepted psychological theories of motivation – Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs and Skinner's Operant Conditioning. It's almost as if the EQ designers picked up a psychology book and said, "Hey, we could use this in a game!"
—Alexander Jhin, computer science/psychology major at Yale

The magazine sometimes seems like the "grumpy old man" of computer gaming... eviscerating many of [the games it reviews].

—Bruce Rolston, referring to CGW in an article on Adrenaline Vault

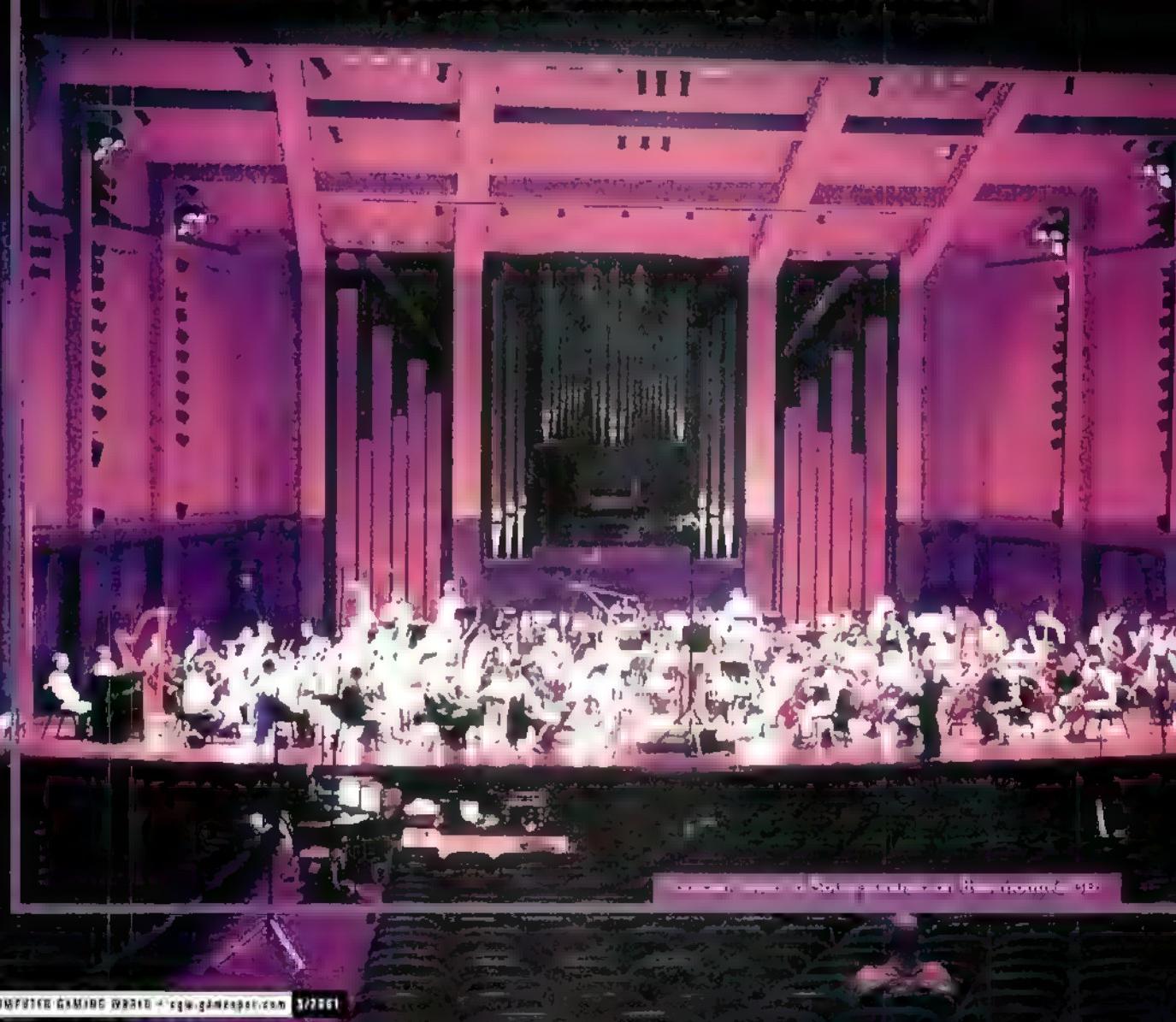
...it seems the Playboy mansion has a curse on it. Who held the Playboy bash [at E3] two years ago? Psygnosis. And what about last year? Gamers.com and 3Dfx. Could the signs be any more clear? I can see the marketing department at Acclaim phoning Hugh right now...
—Fat Insider, Fatbables.com

One person's high is another person's hell. Entertainment which is shocking enough to give one viewer an emotional high can actually cause mental and emotional pain to someone who isn't accustomed to it.

—Anonymous CGW reader, on the issue of violence in gaming

Heart and Soule

A look into the mind of gaming's greatest musician by Alex Handy





Imagine fighting off the Core in **TOTAL ANNIHILATION** without swelling strings and braggadocio horns to accompany your tank rushes. What if the cold plains of **ICEWIND DALE** were devoid of the lifting, soothing sonatas? Indeed, what would the **SECRET OF EVERMORE**—an epic Super Nintendo adventure game—be without the haunting tones of Jeremy Soule's mysterious score?

With all his talent and skill, Soule has been called the John Williams of gaming music. But Soule says the comparison is too generous. "Am I a tenth of what John Williams is in music? No way. However, I aspire to his level of greatness, as do many composers. He's the master." The comparison may be more apt than Soule would like to admit, for in the gaming world he *is* the master. A glance at his current projects proves it: **UNREAL 2**, **DUNGEON SIEGE**, and an undisclosed Xbox launch title (no, not **HALO**). Any of these could easily turn into Soule's personal *Star Wars*.

But for all his digital glory, Soule is not confined to the cut-and-paste world of MIDI. Not only did he write the music for **TOTAL ANNIHILATION**, he also scored it for a full orchestra of more than 100 musicians and conducted it himself. And he's just done it again, this time for Verant Interactive's massively multiplayer online real-time strategy game, **SOVEREIGN**. Soule finished the score for **SOVEREIGN** so early in the game's development that Verant used it to help shape the game, something that's unheard of in any medium outside of opera.

Back in the studio, Soule and his brother Julian, who together form **Soule Media**, are building their own MIDI library based on classic instruments. As a young man, Soule heard a 1958 recording of William Vacchiano playing with the New York Philharmonic, and he recalls being wildly impressed with the sounds coming out of the legendary performer's horn. Then, while casually phone shopping with some instrument collectors, Julian stumbled across Vacchiano's York. He snatched up the trumpet and spent weeks playing over 1,600 samples on the massive horn for their MIDI library.

Why go to all this trouble for a single trumpet's sounds? "Basically [for] personality. Mathematically, it's pretty similar to the original sound," Soule says. "I have total control over lots of the different expressive qualities of the instrument." That personality is now bolstered by a herd of Stradivarius violins, which Julian and Jeremy are using to record the strings section of their library. If you've played **GIANTS: CITIZEN KABUTO**, you've heard these instruments: That soundtrack, arguably the best of any game released last year, is the first full score to use the new MIDI library.

In the gaming world, Soule is quickly becoming an old pro, despite the fact that he's only 28. "My advice to game designers is: Tell me what you want, but listen to me when I say what I need. Composers focus on music way too much, and I think in general, a lot of people don't realize how into what we do [we are]." Listening to Soule over the phone, it's evident just how into music he is. It is his one passion, and everything about it fascinates him. His enthusiasm is downright infectious.

With exceptional talent, technical skills, and that enthusiasm, it won't be long before the name Soule is mentioned alongside Vivaldi, Rachmaninov...and Williams. **CGW**

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Battle Realms

Reinventing real-time strategy by Tom Price



Ed Del Castillo and the rest of the industry veterans at Liquid Entertainment are just as tired as we media types are of games that start out as graphical code and are only filled in with story and gameplay later, almost as an afterthought. Liquid's debut title, **BATTLE REALMS**, was designed from the ground up, with the game's core concepts fully realized and in place before one line of code was ever written. Therefore, the engine was created to fit the game, not the other way around. Without a doubt, this strategy—combined with Del Castillo and cofounder Mike Grayford's extensive industry experience, desire to create innovation in gaming, and dedication to original art direction—should result in **BATTLE REALMS** being one of the must-play titles for strategy gamers this year.

We got a chance to visit Liquid in person and play an early build of **BATTLE REALMS**. And even though we already had been looking forward to the game's summer 2001 release, thanks to the ultra-sweet kung fu/Celtic character concept art that's been flooding the Web, what we saw at Liquid has got us at a fever pitch.

Mo' Money, Mo' Problems

And how does Liquid plan to create what just might be a hall-of-fame level game? Well, the first step is to identify what's wrong with current RTSs. Liquid decided that the traditional resource management system (generate worker units and assign them to harvest the gold or crystals or whatever) is based on outmoded gameplay concepts that reduce RTS games—especially multiplayers—into a race for resources, rewarding the player who's better at managing funds and building up an overwhelming force. Rushes ensue, games end the same way every time, and the gamer is left feeling frustrated and bored. In Del Castillo's words, "Games are real-time-economies instead of real-time-strategies."

Now, some strategy games (**GROUND CONTROL**, for one) deal with this problem by shucking the resource system completely, instead taking the tasks of base building and unit generation completely out of the gamer's hands. In GC's case, what's left is strictly a tactical simulation (albeit a rather cool one, in this writer's opinion) and not really a full-scale RTS.

But instead of avoiding resources, **BATTLE REALMS** deals with them in a more intelligent, realistic way; it treats them as living, fully interactive elements of your environment instead of simple depletable reservoirs. **BATTLE REALMS** does not merely reward those gamers who have become more accustomed to the noninnovative design abstractions that so many other games use as crutches. The world of **BATTLE REALMS** should stimulate gamers into developing more logical strategies for winning.

BATTLE REALMS Is...People!

In fact, it could be argued that the game's most important resources are the units that populate it. Having a sense of investment in your units is tough when you're cranking them out like Beanie Babies from a Guatemalan sweatshop, but **BATTLE REALMS** makes you care about them, not because they're individually so cool (which they are), but because their level of health, stamina, and training reflects those overall qualities in your civilization.

"The world of **BATTLE REALMS should stimulate more logical strategies for winning. **BATTLE****

BATTLE REALMS

GENRE Strategy • RELEASE DATE: Q3 2001

PUBLISHER: Crave Entertainment

DEVELOPER: Liquid Entertainment

CONTACT: www.battlerealms.com; www.bi-central.com

The first step in creating units to fill your world is to build peasant huts, which generate the basic, all-purpose peasant. The rate at which units are generated is determined by your birthrate, which can be affected by various environmental conditions. Interestingly, your unit-production rate will slow down as you gain units. So if you only have a few units, your birthrate will be very high, but as the size of your population increases, your production rate will slow down to almost nil. The developers want to keep the number of units down to a manageable level (about 25 per side), in part to balance out against the increased complexity of each unit, especially combatants, but also to prevent multiplayer matches from ending too early because one person was able to generate more units faster.

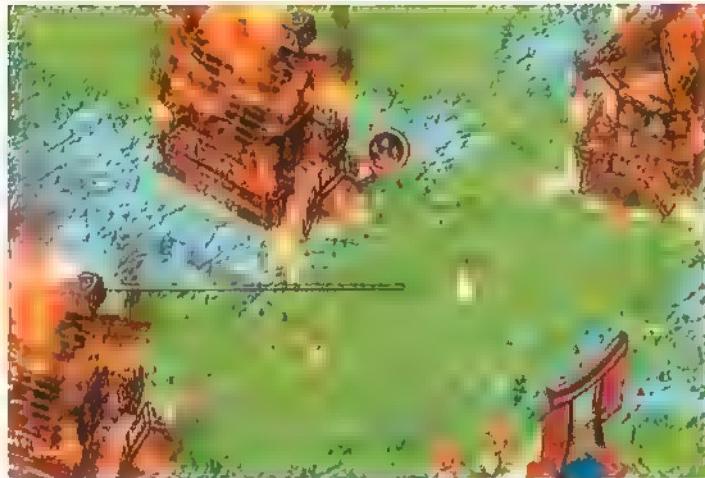
Of course, you will need to keep some units in peasant mode to harvest other resources such as rice and water. Rice serves as a basic monetary unit, required for training your units, among other things. Your excess resources are stored outside your peasant huts. While this gives you a quick visual note of your surplus levels, it also leaves your harvest vulnerable to theft by your opponent. Enemy peasants can simply walk into your base and steal a bag of rice if you're not careful.

The last really important resource that every clan needs is horses. Horses and their riders are independent units in BR, capable of being separated at any time. When you train a horseman, he doesn't just appear magically on horseback. You need to find wild horses, bring them back to your base, and train them (for battle or pack animal duty) before a rider can take one into combat. Once in combat, a rider can be dismounted from his horse (fatally or not), leaving that horse up for grabs. Conceivably, you could ambush your enemy's horsemen with an attack intended to knock them off their mounts—you could set up a trap to make the horses stumble, say—and quickly move in with troops to distract the unmounted riders and peasants, then spirit away the steeds.

Interestingly, each clan uses horses differently. The Serpent and the Dragon clans use horses in pretty straightforward ways, either in battle or as pack animals, but the Wolf clan uses the horses as food for their wolves. The Lotus clan puts some sort of weird curse on their horses so that anyone else who uses them will see their health slowly siphoned off.

Soldier On

To create any kind of fighting unit (peasants will have basic fighting skills, but they're no match for enemy warriors), you don't use military buildings, like the dojo, to generate them, but instead assign peasants to the building to undergo training. In essence, you draft members of your population to become warriors, just like it's done in the real world. For swordsmen, send your guys to the dojo, for archers, the target range, etc. Send a unit to more than one training center and you'll get an even more differentiated and specialized unit, such as a Cannoneer or a Berserker. You can waypoint your peasants from the hut through multiple training buildings to automatically create advanced units. Considering just how interesting some of these units are (the Kabuki Warriors of the Dragon clan or the Wolf clan's



THE ROOF, THE ROOF, THE ROOF IS ON FIRE In other words, burning buildings do the same way in its do, as a surprise representation of hit points. Even though the building is in flames (like it is in AOE or Warcraft), it looks like it's still intact, but it's actually all charred. It's a huge concern for some of the more fragile units, like the Hattie He-As, who take damage over time. A roof can be destroyed by a single hit, but it's not until it's gone that the building becomes vulnerable to further attacks. If you're lucky, it's still standing when it's destroyed, but it's not guaranteed.



SHADOWS AND FOG (OF WAR) See that fine shadow in the middle of the screen? That represents a 3D elevation change, something that's used to combat tools as a Battle Realms. Aches (as well as bows) will be far more effective from the high ground. Those pesky, small, wavy things above the clouds are clouds. They're flying overhead. We've mentioned it's a factor, affecting everything, but you can expect your soldier's effectiveness to decrease as they try to move around the line.



WHO LET THE WOLVES OUT? Here's an overhead view of a field. The terrain is uneven, and visibility is especially low near trees and rocky outcrops. The wolf unit is a perfect example of the visibility issues.

Get gamers into developing
REALMS is... people!"

THE CLANS

The single-player story will have you playing the prodigal son, Kenji. You've returned home to find the land your ancestor Tarrant created as a safe haven from the evil horde divided by civil war and infighting. Here's a quick breakdown of each of the four clans portrayed in BATTLE REALMS:



DRAGON, the clan from which Kenji is a direct descendant. The Dragon clan was the most noble and civilized of all the clans before the horde came, and it's their peaceful and noble ideals that you must reinstate in the world. Both the Dragon and Serpent clans are heavily Asian-themed, with historically inspired characters like samurais, ninjas, and geishas, as well as more fantastical units like monks with magic kung fu powers.



SERPENT, the clan made up of the refugees of the Dragon clan along with several smaller regional groups. The Serpent leadership, including Kenji's father Lord Oja, has made a mess of things and allowed civil war to break out among the scattered factions. It's your job to return the civilization to its past glory while dealing with new problems—namely upstart Wolf and Lotus clans.



WOLF, a primitive, Celtic-inspired clan that is more interested in communing with nature than in advancing culturally or technologically. It doesn't hurt that many of the units are massive, hulking men with big weapons. They eschew advanced combat tactics like fighting on horseback in favor of tactics like using wolves as weapons. They're led by druidic priestesses who employ magic found in the natural world to give their fighters special abilities.

Ballistaman, to name two), you'll want to build as many different kinds as possible, just to play with them and see what they do.

Each unit will have a basic skill or innate ability that is shared with every other unit like them, plus one of a few special abilities that will essentially define them as a separate unit. For example, the Musketeer unit has the basic ability to use his musket, and his effectiveness and accuracy is dependent on range to target as well as on how long he waits until he fires. Musketeers can then switch into one of two modes acquired through research at different buildings: blunderbuss mode, which allows for a devastating short-range attack from behind a shield; or sniper mode, which leaves him vulnerable but with a much more accurate and longer-range attack. When in standard mode, all Musketeers look the same, so if you get the jump on a group of them, you'd better hope they don't assume the blunderbuss position or you're right foored.

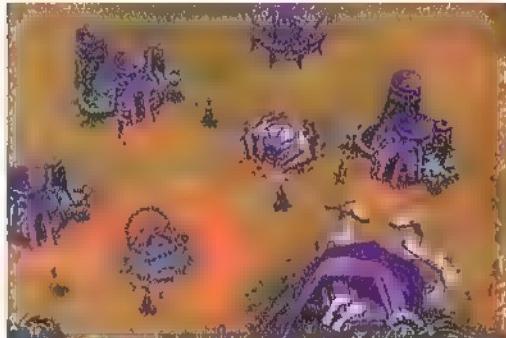
Liquid is putting a lot of effort to make the animations that go along with these specific skills look as cool as possible and reinforce the specialties of each unit. From monks who can make ridiculous flying leaps *Crouching Tiger Hidden Dragon*-style, to samurais with flaming sword attacks, to infested maggot-throwing Lotus clansmen, the action in BATTLE REALMS—with its staggering artistic beauty and excellent martial arts movie atmosphere—will truly be a spectacle.

The guys at Liquid are trying further to break the chains of conventional strategy game-play by tweaking the rock/paper/scissors theory (that is, pikeman beats cavalry, cavalry beats archers, archers beat pikeman, and so on) and allowing your unit to change from a rock to a paper or to a scissors. Some special skills have nothing to do with combat. The Kabuki Warriors have the ability to entertain your peasants, making them happier and therefore more productive. It's this added unit complexity that replaces the management of huge numbers of units as the most challenging and rewarding aspect for the gamer.

Waiting on Pins and Katana

Even though the build we played represented a pretty early phase of development, we're extremely excited about BATTLE REALMS. The solid game-design backgrounds of Del Castillo and everyone else at Liquid, along with their "innovation over iteration" mentality, should ensure that the ambitious design will become a reality. Of course, as long as they keep sending us big full-color versions of the concept art, we'll be happy. **EGW**

LOTUS, easily the most intriguing—not to mention the most disgusting—of all the clans. All of their units and buildings are in a state of perpetual rot, so much so that some units' primary method of attack is simply to throw their diseased innards at the enemy. To tag the Lotus as evil would be reductive. They're misunderstood, because they're cursed and diseased. Not to mention downright retching-inducing.



LOTUS POSITION Hey, they don't look that diseased. Of course, they're rotting, their poison will be sling or exploding in a cloud of toxic maggot-strewn entrails right now, but just wait.



GET 'EM, GIRLS! or, get ready for off-white diarrhea. Lotus clansmen will have a hangover after a night of mauling innocent young things (no, really). Girls act as bait. In other words, they're very good at getting girls.





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IT'S ALL 3D Does this game look great or what? The scenery and Mech animations are extremely detailed.

Mech Commander 2

Eight reasons why you'll want to take command of this all-new Mech force

By Ken Brown

Mech Commander 2

GENRE: Strategy
RELEASE DATE: June 2001
PUBLISHER: Microsoft
DEVELOPER: Microsoft
CONTACT: microsoft.com/games/mechcommander2

Look, Captain. It's too bad you lost your foot in that last battle with House Steiner. It was just bad luck they hit the oil drums before your Atlas left the Mech bay. I know you could've changed the outcome of the battle if your Mech hadn't slipped and crashed at the hangar door—but you have to put that behind you now. Those Cougar pilots posing for pictures—those guys had no honor anyway. Why don't you take command of this mercenary team in the Chaos Marches of the Inner Sphere? Without that foot, you're not going to be a jump-jet jockey anymore—it's time to fight from a different perspective.

That's not the actual setup for MECHCOMMANDER 2, but it might as well be. Fighting from a different perspective is what the game is all about. You're out of the cockpit and up in the sky, watching your Mech formations and directing their attack. While it may not be the visceral, adrenaline-pumping thrill of being a MechWarrior, the game offers greater strategic challenge and gives commanders a broader view of the conflict.

You'll take command of a group of BattleMechs operating in and around three enemy bases. They're locked in a stalemate, and essentially need you to do their dirty work without provoking a larger conflict. As a mercenary unit, you'll have limited resources to work with. Get a few missions under your belt—and some good salvage—and you'll have the money to hire more powerful Mechs.

The basic gameplay will be familiar to players of the original MECHCOMMANDER, but even veterans will find that nearly everything in the sequel has been changed. Here are just a few of the highlights that we think will appeal to anyone looking for a good strategic challenge.



1. Great looks

For years strategy gamers have asked for games where 3D graphics actually made a difference, and in MECHCOMMANDER 2 they do. The game's powerful 3D engine allows you to pan, change your viewing angle, and zoom in close to catch the detail as your Mechs roast enemy units and crush various structures. But 3D also allows true line-of-sight combat, so units at elevation will have an advantage. You can also hide units in the trees and power them down so they can't be detected—perfect for ambushes.

The unit animations look so realistic, they will easily distract you during the first few missions.

2. Not as wonky as the first game

The game's project leader, Mitch Gitelman, is hip to the fact that the original MECHCOMMANDER wasn't very user-friendly. He admits, "The first puzzle in the first game was how to launch a mission." MC2 will walk you through how to equip your Mechs, and there'll be a tactical officer and weapons officer to give you advice. We were surprised there won't be a default pilot option, but Gitelman says that's to emphasize the importance of selecting the right pilots.

MC2 will let you save anywhere, which is something the first game lacked (and for which the developers were roundly drubbed). The first game also had fog-of-war, which was irritating and inappropriate on a 31st-century battlefield. It's gone.

3. Emphasis on pilots

One of the team's goals is to involve you deeper in the action by building an attachment to your pilots. Those walking tanks aren't just robots, you know; they have pilots whose skills increase over time, and who can be killed. Each MechWarrior starts with a gunnery and piloting skill, but every time a pilot is promoted, you get to assign him a special skill. As your MechWarriors progress from Green to Regular to Veteran to Elite to Ace, they become more important to you. It's okay to lose a Mech, but it'll be a big deal to lose an experienced pilot.

4. Greater Mech differentiation



Every Mech in the original MECHCOMMANDER was exactly the same height. B-o-o-o-ring. In MECHCOMMANDER 2 it's easy to tell the 100-ton assault Mechs from the 30-ton scouts, especially when you change camera angles and get a closer view.

The Mechs will come with default load-outs to make it easy to get started. But for those who want to customize, you can add or remove jump jets and weapons to suit your needs. The new game also models

heat, a key component of the MechWarrior fiction that was ignored in the first game. Heat will play an important role in MC2, but fortunately it will not result in any Mechs shutting down. Having greater heat dispersal will just mean you can fire energy weapons more often.

5. Mech snatching

You'll have a maximum of only 12 Mechs on each mission, but it's possible to increase that number by decapitating your enemies. You can give orders to your pilots to aim for an enemy Mech's head, which will be easier from high ground. When one of your warriors scores a head shot, the enemy pilot ejects, leaving the Mech intact. That's when you call in a salvage and repair team, which swoops in like a Marine Osprey and drops your pilot in the enemy unit. Once the Mech is repaired, it's under your control—and you can use it to greater effect since it's painted in the enemy's colors!

6. Air support and resupply



Having a tough time on a mission? Call in an air strike. You'll see the units swoop in and drop their deadly load. Air support will also give players the ability to repair units in the field, lay mines, and scout for enemy units. You can even have air support bring in fixed artillery pieces to soften up enemy positions.

7. Varied gameplay

This is one of the most important factors in MECHCOMMANDER 2, since the designers botched the first game by designing missions with very limited solutions (much like the puzzle-oriented missions in COMMAND & CONQUER). Gitelman and his team are carefully allowing more ways to succeed in each mission.

Several of the missions involve overtaking an enemy base. To do that, you'll need to scout out the base and locate defensive units, gate controls, and turrets. You must decide whether to use your Mechs to jump over the wall and seize specific objectives, engage defenders, or try to lure the heavies into an ambush. Should you neutralize the turrets, or take over the turret controls? There'll be many different kinds of challenges, but this time—hopefully—you won't be limited to one solution.

8. Combined arms

Much of the challenge in this game is figuring out how to outwit powerful opponents with only a small force and limited supplies. To do that, you'll usually need a balanced force of scouts and assault Mechs with short, medium, and long-range capabilities. As anyone who's played a MECHWARRIOR game knows, there are constant trade-offs between armor, weapons, speed, and heat dispersal.

The war machines in MC 2 model each of those factors, and you can be sure the designers are laying traps for any commander who neglects one in favor of something else.

Essentially, your goal will be to put the right MechWarriors into the right combination for the mission. It may be elusive, but finding that ideal combination will be the critical ingredient to victory. CGW

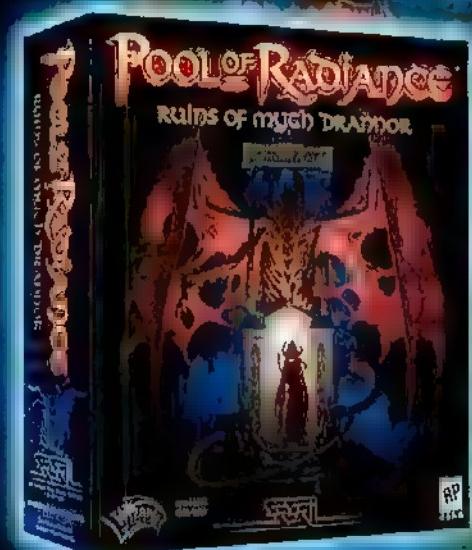


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Dungeon Siege

Can Microsoft outduel DIABLO? by George Jones

Role-playing games are too freaking complicated," exhorts Chris Taylor of **TOTAL ANNIHILATION** fame. Designer, programmer, and one of gaming's most opinionated, colorful, and experienced characters, Taylor is clearly just getting warmed up. "You spend all this time reading text and rolling numbers," he continues, gesturing wildly with his hands, his voice rising. "I just want to have fun."

And that's the primary word, motivation and concept behind DUNGEON SIEGE, a highly evolved fusion of DIABLO and the real-time strategy genre: fun. But spend enough time with Taylor and his Gas Powered Games crew, and another theme—individualism—quickly becomes apparent.

As he walks us through DUNGEON SIEGE, one thing becomes clear: Taylor is a quote machine. But his hilarious and often biting sense of humor belies a sharply intelligent, highly analytical mind. It's not easy to break down game design and harder still to convey such analysis, especially in the off-the-cuff manner he can. When it comes to gameplay, everything Chris Taylor says makes total sense.

So when he claims that monsters in most games suffer from what he calls Smoking Cigarette Syndrome, you initially laugh out loud because it seems absurdly funny. Then he goes on to explain what he and his team actually mean, and the joke becomes even funnier.

Smoking Cigarette Syndrome occurs when monsters simply sit out in the open waiting for you to come by, without any pretense of story, motivation, or situation. In Taylor's hyperactive mind, he imagines these guys sitting around smoking cigarettes, grumbling to each other, "This is great work when

you can get it."

To Gas Powered Games, DUNGEON SIEGE is great work that they definitely do get—hence the game's focal points of personalized fun, without any restrictions.

The reason you don't roll your own character or choose attributes or classes or statistics at the beginning of the game is that, in Taylor's mind, it is far more fun—and far more effective from a story-telling perspective—to allow gamers to build their own characters sans any preconceptions. And while the game does keep track of the usual statistics and attributes, these numbers rarely limit your options.

For this reason, there are no character or class restrictions. You can play entirely as a fighter and then switch over to the magic track mid-game without any penalty. For this same reason, characters don't die in battles; they're simply knocked unconscious. The game ends only when the last character is knocked out, meaning if you can escape a battle with one character alive, you don't have to restart. "We don't want to punish people for playing the game," Taylor explains.

Fun also extends to the game's numerous evolutionary leaps over titles like DIABLO II. Pack mules are available to transport all the goods you pick up. You can return a suit of armor for full value. And thanks to what Taylor refers to as the game's Potion-Sipping Technology ("There's so much masturbation around technology," he jokes, "we felt like we needed some kind of gimmick"), when you drink from your health potions, you drink only as much as you need. Gamers long used to monitoring their health to maximize the benefits of potions are smiling everywhere.

The gameplay efficiencies even extend to combat. Hot keys allow you to toggle between several different configurations of melee and ranged weapons for your party. And, much like in a real-time strategy game, you can set up formations, spacing, and behavior modes, and even target orders for your troops. So when facing a large group of Goblins, you can—with a single key—order your party to switch to ranged fire and not advance on the enemy. As the enemies get closer, you can then order your fighters to advance with their melee weapons, targeting the strongest enemy first, while your weaker units hold





The goblins' formations allow you to protect your weaker, spell-casting members.

back and keep firing ranged weapons or spells.

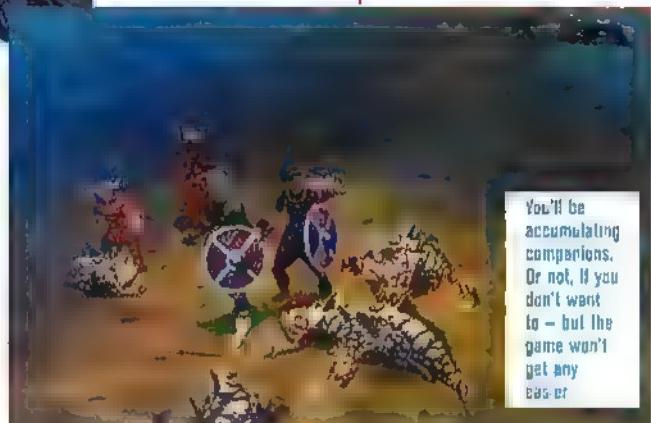
In keeping with the goal of allowing gamers to play however they'd like, DUNGEON SIEGE lets you configure your party in any way and with any weapons. Although some special weapons have strength requirements, any character can use any weapon, item, or armor. But certain items will definitely work better with some characters. A magic-using character might, for instance, put on some highly protective armor only to find that it messes up his spell-casting speed and slows down his mana recharge rate.

Consistent with previous role-playing games, DUNGEON SIEGE features a load of loot. An item-generation system randomly creates magic weapons from over 500 different weapon types. One such weapon, for example, could be a jewel-encrusted flaming sword that gives +20 to all stats. From the demonstration we saw, the game's pack mules are going to come in mighty handy.

Curiously, DUNGEON SIEGE, at least at the beginning, consists of a fairly typical storyline. You're working on your farm, when suddenly hordes of monsters start coming at you. People get kidnapped, and you're charged with their rescue. Although the plot does seem dedicated to explaining why such ghastly events are occurring ("Right when you ask, 'Why am I killing all these things?' we tell you," Taylor says), it seems odd that Gas Powered Games would fall back on such an overused setup for the game. Hopefully, as the game develops, the quests and developments within the game will keep the plot twisting and turning in the process, keeping gamers off-balance and surprised.



DUNGEON SIEGE manages to convey what very few RPGs can: a dynamic sense of scale.



You'll be accumulating companions. Or not. If you don't want to — but the game won't get any easier.

The environments within the game definitely avoid cliché. The realm of the Goblins, for instance, features all sorts of industrial and mechanical activity. Other areas are just as astonishing. The Dwarven mines possess an almost *Indiana Jones* feel, with rails and lifts and tracks, while another area appeared, as Taylor describes, "a little closer to the dungeons of our imaginations." Overwhelmingly, the environments in Dungeon Siege appear vibrantly alive, which should make them well worth exploring.

"Our design philosophy is that we want to have three people standing behind one person playing the game, with them all disagreeing on how to play," Taylor, somewhat flushed in the face, is finishing up now. "That would be the perfect game."

We'll be the first in line to find out. **CGW**

DUNGEON SIEGE
GENRE: RPG • RELEASE DATE: September 2001
PUBLISHER: Gas Powered Games
DEVELOPER: Microsoft
CONTACT: www.microsoft.com

Underground Music

Jeremy Soule, the subject of this month's Game/Art/Culture (page 40), will be recording all of DUNGEON SIEGE's music; thus the score should be suitably epic. Evidently, Soule has been composing while watching videos of gameplay, in much the same way orchestras play to projections of movies in Hollywood.

Summoner

Call up some buddies for a good ol' fashioned beatdown by Thierry Nguyen

A flowing narrative in which you flitter about the world, save some hapless fools, and in the midst of combat, call upon myriad beasties to help you out. Gee, doesn't this sound like something befitting a FINAL FANTASY title? Why linger on this page anymore, when you can just pop open a console mag and read about some other anime-drenched RPG?

Because Volition is making this one. The same team who helped create DESCENT when the world was enamored with the 2D-ness of DOOM. The same people who crafted FREESPACE 2 and showed that you didn't need X-Wings or Kilrathi in order to have a great space sim. Hopefully, their ability to bring craftsmanship and originality into tired premises will pan out again. SUMMONER is supposed to be shipping by the time you read this, but take a gander at these screens in the meantime. CGW

GENRE: RPG • RELEASE DATE: Q2 01

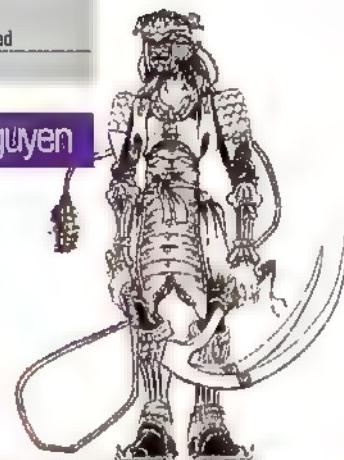
PUBLISHER: THQ

DEVELOPER: Volition Incorporated

CONTACT: www.summoner.com



NASTY BOYS On the left, the Demon of Darkness and on the right, a Serpent Rider - just two of the buddies you'll encounter in SUMMONER.

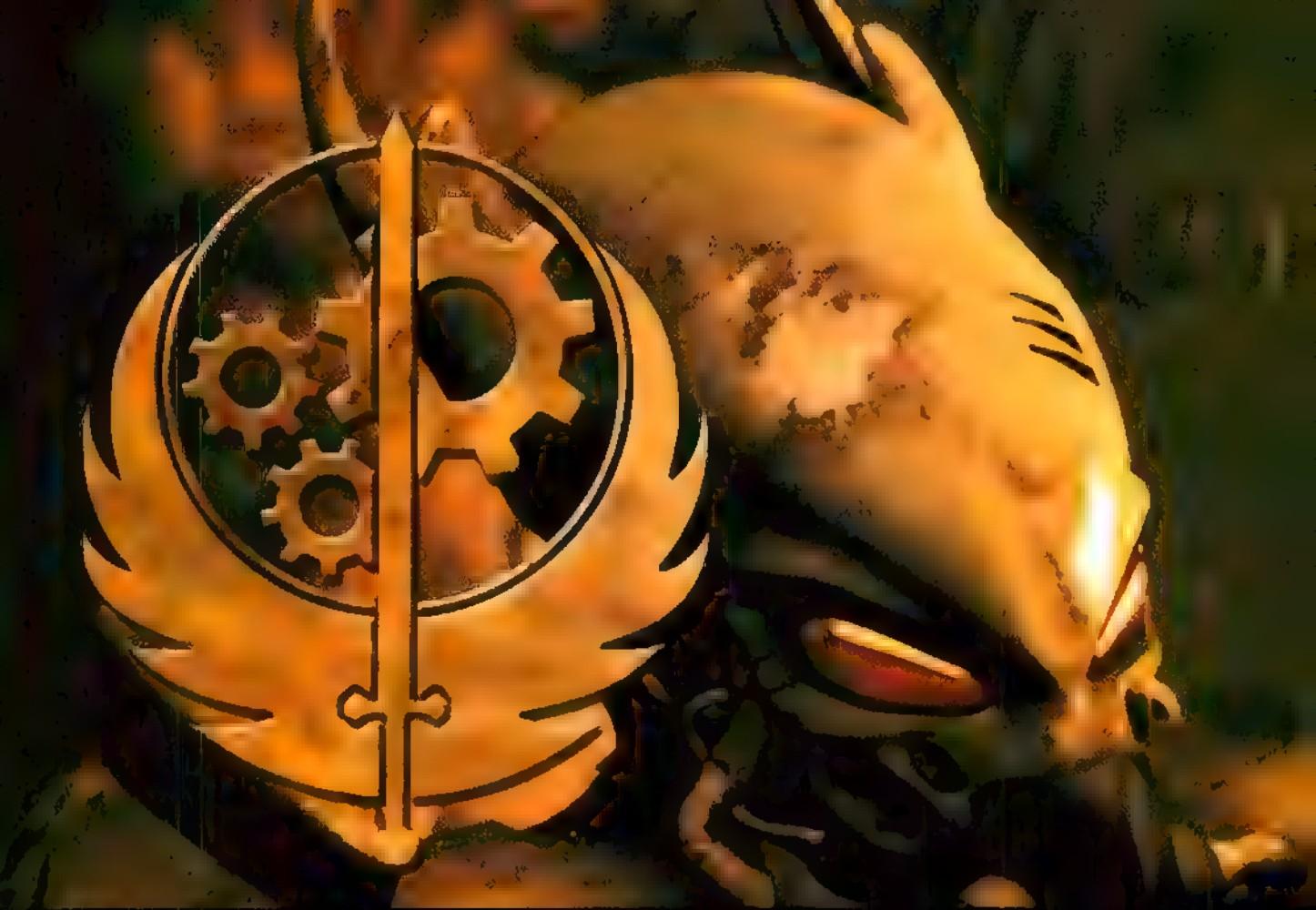


AXING MY MOONLIGHT Most of this landscape is eastern-inspired, allowing you to look at evocative housing while your party members attack some enemies around.



BIG RED Joseph needs to snag some rings and key items by trying combinations to call upon demons like this guy.





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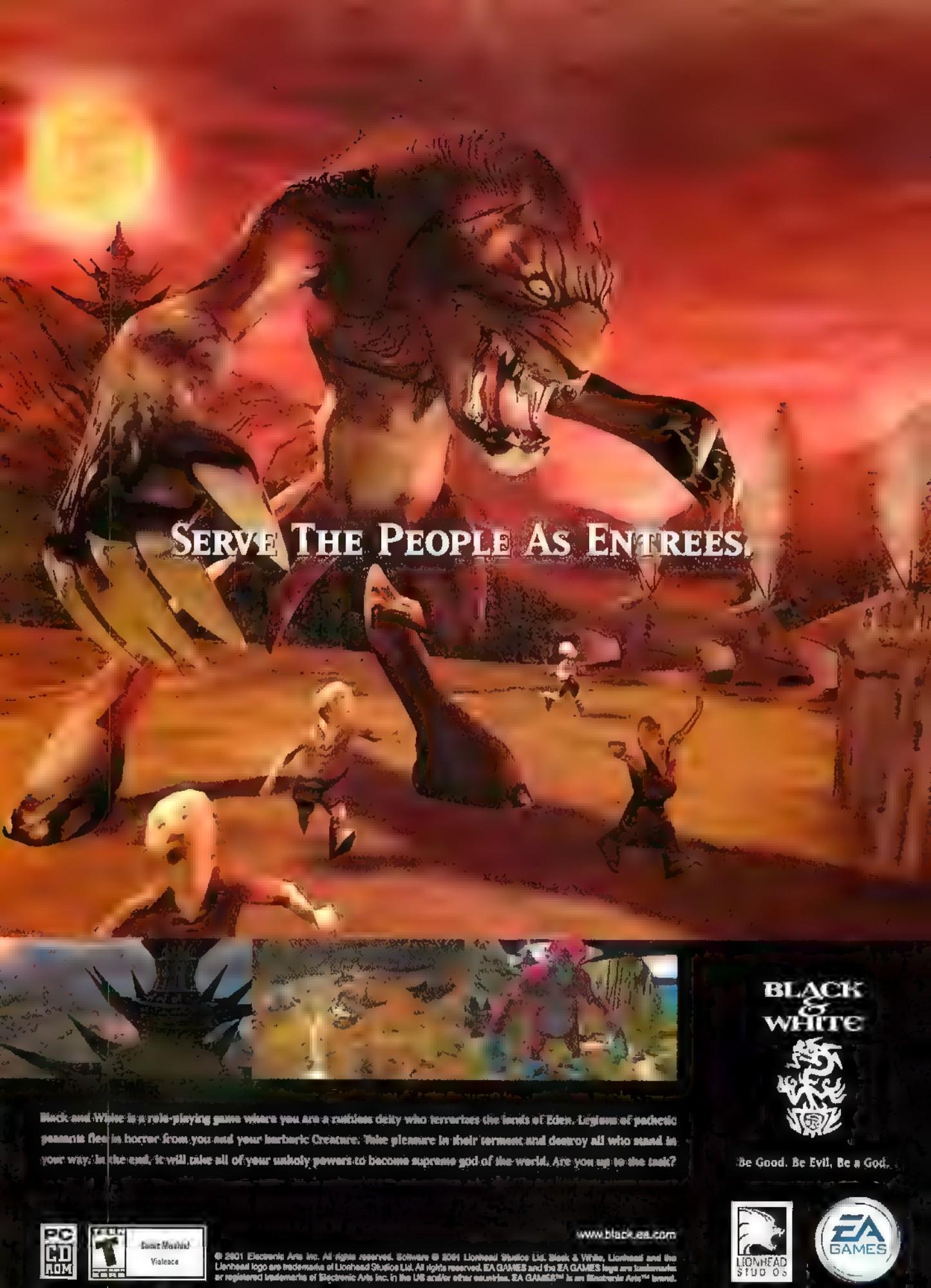
Black and White is a role-playing game where you are a benevolent god who rules over the idyllic lands of Eden. Legions of worshipers lay before you and your gentle giant, awaiting your guidance. As your influence grows, so too will your godly powers and knowledge of Miracles. In the end, the fate of the world lies in your hands. Are you up to the task?



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flattening buildings, stomping people, and shooting planes with laser-beam vision. See how much damage you can do before the Army, Air Force, or MechaGodzilla turn you into a lake of blood.

In the campaign, you'll pick a monster from the canon of B-movie classics, or build your own by mixing and matching limbs, armor, jaws, and wings. Then, pick a remote island or submarine fissure that you can call your "deep-sea lair." The game begins when a seismic event disgorges you to terrorize quaint seaside Japanese villages. You'll need to gain experience and power before heading off to the big city to take on the armed forces, or other atomic pituitary cases.

The game should shine in multiplayer mode, where you create a monster and go toe-to-toe with up to seven other brutes in cities like Hong Kong or Rio, with totally destructible environments

Story by CGW Staff

Illustrations by Pixel Pushers

First-Person Football

Give us football through the ultimate lens: human eyes. FIRST-PERSON FOOTBALL puts you inside the helmet of your favorite NFL player—be it quarterback, running back, or linebacker—on the team of your choice. Controls would be similar to a first-person shooter, including mouse-look, and you could control any player on the field, each with his own specialized role. The quarterbacks would be the most popular—but it wouldn't be easy making realistic reads of your receivers, then choosing where to throw, while defensive linemen try to dislocate your ribs. Defenders would have their own unique challenges, with a more complex set of moves to learn (almost TEKKEN-like) in order to beat offensive linemen to the QB. Multiplayer mode would support up to 22 people, so you could have truly legendary gridiron showdowns.

Wrath of the Gods

All kinds of characters have shown up in fighting games, from kung fu traditionalists Ryu and Ken of STREET FIGHTER, to comic book superheroes like the X-Men and the Incredible Hulk, to sassy Japanese schoolgirls in short skirts. But who we'd really like to see duking it out in some kind of gladiatorial pantheon are the gods of the world's religions. Everyone would be represented—from Atlas to Zarathustra—and they would all kick some major deity ass. Each would have special powers or attacks: Buddha would flatten opponents with his Super Buddha Belly Bounce; Shiva would strike furiously with her multi-armed attack; and of course, Jesus would be able to heal himself. You could even have tag team mode. Odin could tag his partner Mercury to come in and beat up on a weakened Quetzalcoatl, while Satan waits in the wings. Playing WRATH OF THE GODS would be the most entertaining route to damnation since the invention of fornication.

Time Patrol

One day you're a successful undercover cop in Los Angeles. On the heels of an enigmatic art thief, you stumble upon a crime syndicate that, much to your disbelief, involves stealing art in the 20th century and distributing it to high-paying clientele in the 23rd century. Right as you figure this out, you're contacted with a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to join the Time Patrol, a police force from the future.

TIME PATROL's gameplay, a mix of real-time X-COM-style strategy and 3D shooter, involves protecting the period from 1600 to 1999 from thieves, racketeers, and apocalyptic nuts. You'll find yourself commanding units in battles as well as spying on European aristocrats. The heart of the game is decision-making. You'll face emotionally complex decisions: To preserve the flow of time, should you disable the futuristic technology the 19th-century Apache Indians find, even if it means their annihilation?





Route 666: To Hell and Back

An R-rated, black-comedy, road-movie adventure game. Pick up a succubus at a strip club! Meet Sisyphus! Taunt Tantalus! Mini-games galore—race your hellacious Camaro convertible through Hades, play Whack-a-Soul with the spirits of the eternally damned, win prizes at the Carnival of Souls' Nine Rings of Hell Toss, and more! Enjoy a sweetbread stew with Jeffrey Dahmer! Box with Liberace! Engage in cannibalism at Alexander Woolcot's Algonquin Round Table of Blinding Pain! Uncover shocking truths, like how Bill Keane sold his soul to create *Family Circus*! Discover Satan's sinister pact with Celine Dion!

It's a no-holds-barred romp through Purgatory as you try to rectify a heavenly clerical error, reclaim your immortal soul, and return to the Land of the Living. Nine epic chapters of irreverent fun—one for every ring of everlasting torment!

Featuring a cameo by Sid Vicious as Saint Peter at the Pearly Gates.

DJ Battle

Take a decent, first-person, role-playing-game (RPG) engine and combine it with a powerful, accessible music sequencer like the MTV Music Generator, throw in some PARAPPA-style challenges, and you have DJ BATTLE—a game that lets you become a hip hop deity. You'll start with two turntables and a microphone and work your way up from bar mitzvahs to the club scene, gaining money, equipment, and, most importantly, notoriety by performing for the people and taking on other DJs in head-to-head battles. The best part is, you're actually creating your own music as you go.

The online possibilities are almost endless, with a persistent online rave universe as the ultimate way to share your music with other gamers, as well as with regular fans who could check out the real-time scratch-offs and jam sessions over streaming media, then vote on the winner. Whoever makes it to the top of the playoff tree will square off against a big-time, real-world DJ like Fatboy Slim or Roni Size. This game needs to be made right about now, funk soul brother.

Ten Suns

Games based on mythology usually borrow from well-known stories but rarely look past Hercules for inspiration. Enter our third-person action game TEN SUNS, a Chinese-based fable about a god king, his 10 sons, and a warrior champion.

Legend has it that each day a different son drove a chariot harnessed to six jade dragons across the sky, warming the earth. But the sons grew bored with this and decided to ride together, burning the earth in the process. Crops withered, oceans boiled, people died of starvation, and monsters sprang forth to drink their blood.

The King sends you—his

greatest archer—to bring his sons to reason. You build your character the way you choose: Become a warrior with living armor, a mage capable of summoning red dragons, or a Shard bird that rains down deadly jade, turning everything you touch to glass. You'll gain experience by killing the winged beasts that carry off peasants and perform side quests like freeing the rain dragon, Lung, who brings water back to the people.

In one of the final levels, you gain the trust of the mythical Ki-Lin, the one-horned beast of Chinese lore. Fully charged, you can hunt one of the sons in an aerial joust—or transform into a sea dragon and fight in a water world.

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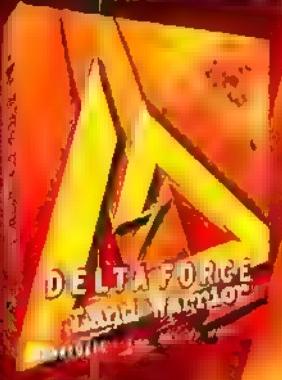
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Bad Reception

It's a motif that's been explored numerous times in the last 50 years: the concept of being stuck inside your television and appearing on whatever program happens to be on at the moment. John Ritter and Pam Dawber did it in 1992's *Stay Tuned*. So why not do it in a computer game? **BAD RECEPTION** puts the player on a bad trip through the cathode tube, zapping you from TV show to TV show, where you must solve puzzles and fight baddies to make your way out of the TV and back to the real world of your living room couch. With

the wide variety of "stuff" on real-life TV, the sheer randomness of the levels in **BAD RECEPTION** could be dizzying. One minute you could be Jerry getting chased by Tom, the next minute in a Ron Popeil infomercial where the gadgets have gone haywire. Anything could be a level, from old black-and-white sitcoms, to cheesy '70s sci-fi dramas, to grotesque dating shows where you must defeat the ultimate end-boss, Chuck Woolery. Use the **QUAKE III** or **UNREAL** engine, and **BAD RECEPTION** will be solid gold (ooh, there's another level!).

Bare Knuckles: The Fist-en-ing

The baddest street gang in town has stolen your girl (or boy), and now you've got to kick ass to win him or her back. One part **TEKKEN**, one part **ONI** (the good parts, anyway), and five parts **RIVER CITY RANSOM**, **BARE KNUCKLES: THE FIST-EN-ING** features intense melee combat and wave after wave of punks to clobber. Create your own character piece by piece, then head out with up to eight friends and fight your way to Mr. Big Boss. The number of punks you'll face in any given scene is governed by how many people are playing. As you progress, you'll gain experience and money by busting lips. When you come to a strip mall, spend the money on better equipment (new shoes, gloves, pants) and spend experience points to learn new moves at the dojo. Fully interactive environments allow you to pick up just about anything and use it as a weapon.

Make these games too!

Yeah, we know most games based on movies suck, but we still have hope.

Scanners To hell with spells; we want an RPG where we use incredible psychic powers in an epic struggle of good and evil brainiacs fighting for control of humankind. C'mon, who doesn't want to use their mind to make a bad guy's head pop like an overripe pomegranate?

Saving Private Ryan We know **MEDAL OF HONOR** and **RETURN TO CASTLE WOLFENSTEIN** will bring WWII-shooter action to the PC eventually, but we're still not sure if

they'll capture the scale, heroism, and terror that distinguished the movie. Adrenaline rushes are fine, but we're ready for an FPS that makes us feel courageous and noble.

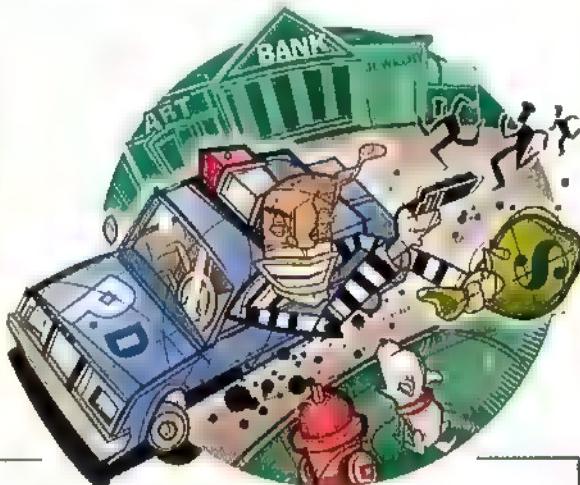
X-Men The movie was surprisingly cool; an X-COM-style game would be cooler. The trick would be making sure that all of the comic's signature moves and elements are present—the lack of a "Fastball special" in the movie is regrettable, but in a game, it would be unforgivable.

Gladiator Do you like gladiator movies, Jimmy? We sure do, and we're champing at the bit for a game that'll let us fight in increasingly difficult arena battles as we develop and increase our skills in various facets of bloodsport. Sierra's bagged this

Life of Crime

Suave master criminal or Public Enemy Number One? It's your call in this party-based role-playing game. Starting out as a lowly street thug, you'll gain experience in electronics, stealth, firearms, and more as you work your way from liquor store stickups to sophisticated museum thefts and international bank robberies. Go the way of the gun and your robberies may be easier, but you'll be hounded and hunted around the globe until you steal weapons of mass destruction to hold the planet hostage.

You'll create only one character, à la **BALDUR'S GATE**, but you'll have access to a wide variety of such professionals as hired guns, security experts, safecrackers, and drivers. This gives the other characters personal stories and lives that you'll have to deal with. **LIFE OF CRIME** is story driven, with lots of optional jobs and a strong emphasis on tactical combat/theft execution. You'll negotiate prison escapes, brazen daylight bank takeovers, midnight museum burglaries, vicious armored-car robberies, nerve-wracking government infiltrations, and more.



gold mine—let's hope they get it right (and ship it on PC).

Blazing Saddles Mel Brooks' classic Western farce (1974) was ripe then as a movie, and it's ripe now for a game. The poor folks of Rock Ridge suffered a "sheriff murdered, crops burned, stores looted, people stampeded, and cattle raped." We need to head back there and set that place right, with a force-feedback mouse to feel every note of their rootin'-tootin' campfire scenes.

Naked Lunch We're not sure what it would play like, but we do know that any game with Mugwumps, narcotic bug spray, the ill-fated "William Tell trick," and a typewriter that talks out of a greasy swollen anus is precisely the sort of game we need to play.

Lineage



Lineage: 'Oath of the Great

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Rebuilding the Empire!

CIVILIZATION III places
Firaxis — and gamers —
one step ahead of the curve.

By George Jones



Once you get CIVILIZED, you get obsessed. Once you get obsessed, you binge. The spiral cannot be managed or avoided. Only endured—and enjoyed—for minutes, days, hours, years.

You relate to the tales, almost always recounted with the kind of guilty pride reserved for more carnal pleasures. There's the new-to-gaming editorial intern who booted up CIV at 2 o'clock one afternoon and, when everyone came into the office the next morning, was still at his computer. There's the lawyer who mailed Sid Meier a four-page lawsuit seeking compensatory damages at the lawyer's hourly rate for all the time he spent playing CIV instead of working. There's the woman who spent an entire weekend—48 hours straight—playing. And how about the college couple that agreed to alternate playing in one-hour shifts, only to see the girlfriend lock her boyfriend out one night for hours so she could finish a game.

To hear it from Sid Meier's perspective, the success of CIVILIZATION centers around two elements. The game's topic sets the first hook, allowing you to, in a sense, rewrite human history by developing your people into a global power. And then the gameplay pushed forward the addictive concept of one...more...turn.

The crucial aspect of the game, Sid argues, is that it keeps players ahead of the curve. In this multifaceted, turn-based environment, you're primarily acting and occasionally reacting, with several ongoing "plot" lines going at any time. By contrast, most real-time games, by their very nature, keep you on your heels reacting. And the only plot line is to react in the appropriate way.

This doesn't take into account the power of your mind, which transforms enemy leaders' aggression into something personal. Hell, it transforms everything in the game into something personal.

At their best, this is what computer games do. They harness the raw power of our imagination to run wild. That's how DOOM becomes the scariest game ever. That's how we become convinced that HIGH HEAT



Pieter Brueghel's *Tower of Babel* serves as the artistic muse for the CIV III design team.

CIVILIZATION III

2000 favors the boss's Red Sox over all other teams.

And this, friends, is how CIVILIZATION will once again become a dominant, life-changing experience.

When Sid Meier and Firaxis began to think about how they wanted to approach CIV III, they immediately decided upon four guiding principles for this sequel.

First, the game needed to further develop its nonmilitary facets. "The original concept had different aspects, but the military was definitely the most well-rounded," Meier explains. "It was a far more viable way to win the game." To add extra dimension to the game, the economic and diplomatic models are being filled out, and a whole new, unheard-of element of culture is being introduced.

Now game worlds sport raw materials that, when sitting within a city's sphere of influence, can be used for the good of the player's civilization.

The CALL TO POWER games, neither of which received much critical praise, introduced a similar device. But the key difference between those versions and this one illustrates Meier's ownership and clear understanding of the fundamental concepts of CIVILIZATION. In Firaxis' design, the raw map resources tie directly into the gameplay. Rather than functioning strictly as a source of revenue, raw goods can be used to build certain types of units or to make your citizens happier. You can also use them to amplify your power, and possibly even win the game.

Just like CIV I and II, all elements in CIVILIZATION III point directly to the decision-making that is so critical to successful gameplay.

Nowhere is this more evident than the design decision to add the element of culture into the game. An already more ethereal notion than diplomacy or money, Firaxis is making it work by abstracting the principles of culture—knowledge, influence, and identity—and applying it to the decision-making. Libraries and other city improvements accumulate culture points for a civilization, expanding their borders and influence. The older the library, the more culture you accumulate. The more culture you accumulate, the easier it is to happily assimilate conquered cities.

The second guiding principle of CIVILIZATION III—the fun factor—governs the overall approach of the game. Instead of simply adding and building on top of CIVILIZATION II (1996), Firaxis decided to go back to the roots of the original. "We loved the accessibility of that first game. It was so easy to start playing," Meier explains. "Right from the beginning, all this cool stuff started happening."

So—and this is particularly true in the early phases of play—CIV III emphasizes wonder and adventure. Many refinements and improvements, both major and minor, move toward this goal. Settler units have now been split into two—the original Settlers and terrain-improving Workers, who can be captured by other players.

continued on page 71

A sort of Disney-land reality, the final game should have 16 world leaders represented. Like in CIV and CIV II, their personalities will be randomized in every new game.



Extra Dimensions of CIVILIZATION**Material Goods**

Each raw-good icon supplies an entire civilization with that particular good. Resources such as iron and uranium allow a civilization to produce certain goods. Luxuries such as ivory make the population happier. **Rules:** One icon supplies all cities linked to each other by road or by harbor with that particular good.

Value: Adds extra depth to the game's economic mode in a tangible way. Allows players to create monopolies on certain goods within continents, in a sense becoming power brokers.

Possible Drawback: Requiring cities to be linked together could create some annoyances. Also, linking resources to unit-building could prove frustrating.

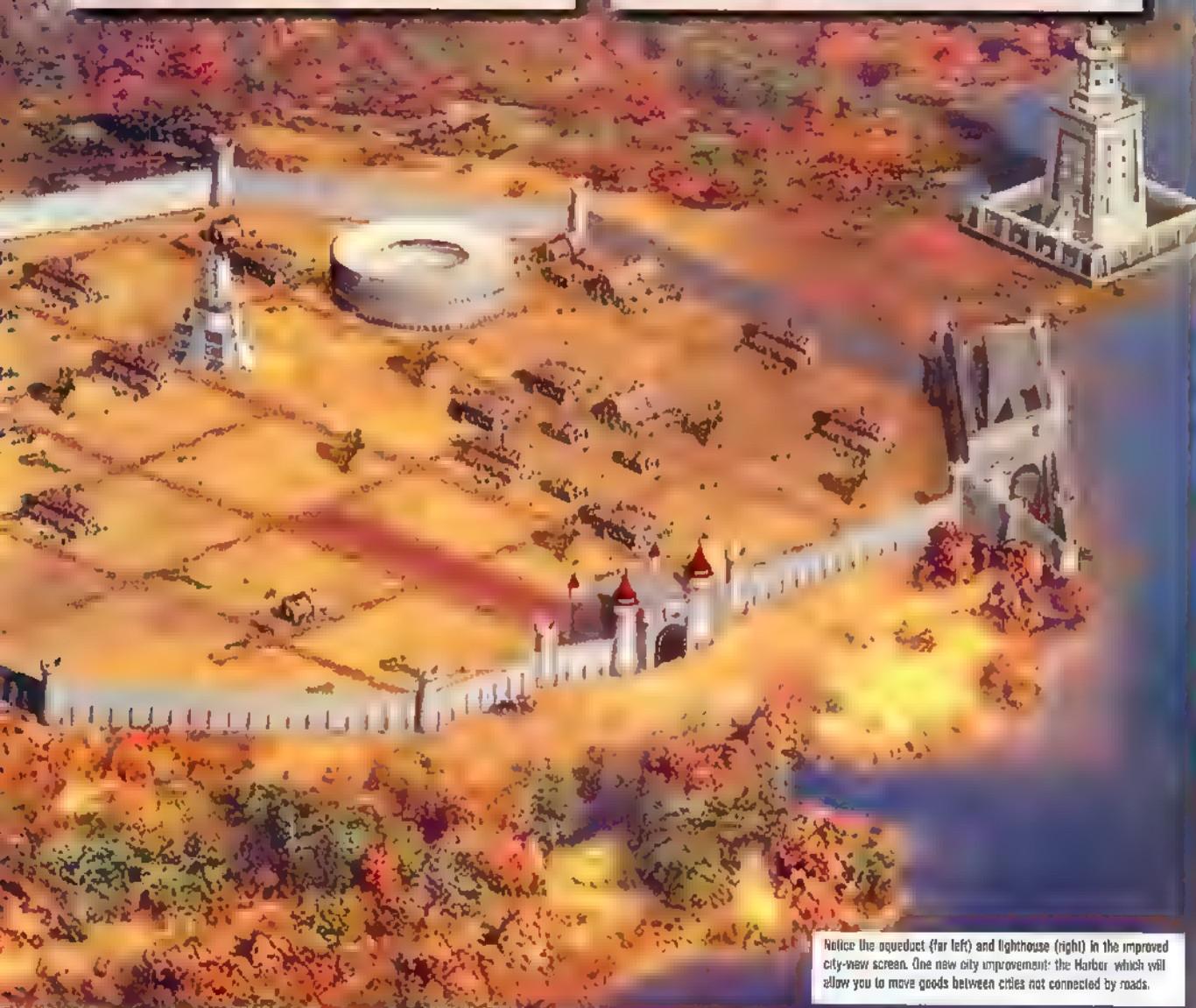
**Culture**

Each civilization accumulates cultural points based on the types of city improvements built and how long they've been around. When one civilization takes over a foreign city, a stronger culture rating will make the assimilation easier and avoid debilitating unhappiness.

Rules: If you build cultural improvements (a library, Wonder) early in the game, these enhancements will generate cultural points the entire game. They may also expand your influence and your city borders. Captured units retain their cultural identity.

Value: Creates extra tension and opportunity trade-offs around decision-making. Gun-or-enhancement decisions become even more critical in the early game because of the cultural payoff. Also places more even emotional and functional value on older cities.

Possible Drawback: Will be too confusing?



Notice the aqueduct (far left) and lighthouse (right) in the improved city-view screen. One new city improvement: the Harbor which will allow you to move goods between cities not connected by roads.

Sid Speaketh

**On Dinosaurs,
Game Design,
and Everything
In Between**

Sid Meier on...



Console Games "Frankly, I keep my [10-year-old] son away from console games. They emphasize less thinking and more twitching."

Violence "On one hand, I believe people should be able to build any game they want. On the other hand, as designers, we shouldn't abuse the freedoms we have. The emphasis on violence for shock value was just a phase. We can stretch those horizons, but ultimately it's a dead end."

Blizzard Entertainment "I have enormous respect for those guys. I'm not sure who is behind their talent, but they're amazing."

Gaming History "It's a shame that we have no living history of computer games. Gamers new to the industry can't play any of the classics."

The Internet "We're right on the edge of something really big. Right now, we're still taking single-player games and converting them, but it all seems to be laying the foundation for something huge. Maybe THE SIMS online will do it."

"The only advantage I have," Sid Meier laughs when asked to explain what it's like to be Sid Meier, "is that I get one 'get out of jail free' card...I get to make one mistake." It's clear that the most highly regarded designer in PC gaming doesn't overstate himself. "The Sid Meier who gets his name on box covers is almost another person. He gives me certain freedoms, but I don't take it too seriously."

It's surprising to hear Meier speak. In a tone that's neither forceful nor slight, and in a manner that's neither outgoing nor shy, he answers questions and offers up his opinions with the simple kind of clarity that has you, two days later, quoting him to your friends. It's easy to think that he likes you.

The reality is that he probably does. After all, this is a guy who allowed a newly hired programmer to stay in his house. This is a guy who plays the piano with his son's church choir, whose wife raises rabbits, and whose grandmother still sends cookies to his Hunt Valley, Maryland, offices. His approach and style are infectious and instantly noticeable. When you talk a stroll around the Firaxis offices, you find that everyone gets along and, while there's plenty of jokes and laughing, everything is oriented toward CIVILIZATION III.

Sid Meier is all about game design. "My name on the box is not a guarantee," he opines. "I still have to write good games." As he speaks, you notice that he doesn'tidget. As he speaks, he sits back with the calm, relaxed mannerisms of a jazz musician. He leans forward as he discusses his approach to game design. He's excited.

He offers some insight into why his games are so unique. "I like to choose a topic first, and then find the right way to present it. CIVILIZATION, for example, started off as a SIMCITY type of game, with zones for farms and cities. But I felt like I was playing the game with gloves on." So he shelved it for a while, went on to develop COVERT ACTION for Microprose and then went back to CIV. Halfway through the design, he started to get the feeling he was onto something special, but couldn't tell for sure. "In the back of my mind, I was going, 'You're a geek and no one will understand this.'"

He has a long history of starting games and then stopping them. "I did the same thing with RAILROAD TYCOON, which started off as a model railroad game. I put it away, then came back later and finished it." Gamers can only hope that the same will happen to DINOSAURS. "We just couldn't figure out to make it as cool as it sounded," he explains with the kind of candor and humility you rarely experience anywhere, let alone in the gaming

*"My name on
the box is not a
guarantee. I still
have to write good
games."*

industry. "The middle portions of the game kept getting bogged down."

More than anything else, Meier, who was born and raised in Detroit, is drawn to historical topics: dinosaurs, precivilization, the American Revolution, the Civil War, even the loosely historical era that served as the setting for *PIRATES*, one of his personal favorites.

Surprisingly, he doesn't believe in loads of nonfiction around his topics. "We have a joke that we only do the research after the game is finished. If I read too many books, I will create a game based on the books." He offers up Chris Crawford's *BALANCE OF POWER*, "a great game that was impossibly difficult," to support this notion. Instead, his goal is to take the topic and create a game based on what everyone knows or idealizes, as was the case with his favorite. "*PIRATES* was about pirate movies, not the period."

So what's next for Meier, who lists the original *Risk* boardgame, *CITIES OF GOLD*, *M.U.L.E.*, *EMPIRE*, *DIABLO*, *STARCRAFT*, and *AGE OF EMPIRES* as his all-time favorites? "I'd like to get involved in a massively multiplayer game, but I don't have a clear idea what I'd do."

We can only hope that, sometime between now and the end of *CIVILIZATION III*, he figures one out. That would be a game worth playing.



On this early main map screen, you can see the improved city graphics as well as several raw materials.

continued from page 68

Then there's the addition of Great Leaders. Any time a unit wins a battle and gets promoted to veteran status, there's a small chance a Leader will be spawned. When this happens, get the Leader back to a city without being captured, and then you can use him for three tasks. He can build an army (essentially a stacked unit that fights all at once), form a Military Academy (which builds armies), or accelerate the construction of one building in your empire.

Depending on how the idea comes through in playtesting, the design team is also toying with allowing Great Artists, Explorers, and Scientists to be born out of cities leading in each category.

Even the long-standing tradition of random barbarian attacks has been tweaked with this notion of fun and adventure in mind. The unwashed hordes now have encampments on the map. Destroy one and they will reappear where the fog of war is in place.

As you begin to play further into the game, *CIV III* gradually adds complexity. But if you've played *CIVILIZATION* before, you already know that. Unhappiness becomes disruptive and harder to control. Plus you have to figure out how to maximize your research, and *what* to research. And then there's diplomacy; *CIV III* sports some nice improvements here that make negotiations more conversational and grant you more latitude, such as the right to deny enemy units passage on your roads.

Thankfully, given the emphasis on accessibility, Firaxis is going out of its way to make the interface as simple and as efficient as possible. This means improvements like advisers who can tell you how trustworthy the Chinese are, for example, and the ability to allocate your workers within your cities right on the main screen.

One game feature we'd love to see but didn't hear about is a method for consistently tracking your skills at the game. Perhaps similar to a game like *BLACK AND WHITE*, this would allow you to log in when you play, and would record your overall statistics and perhaps rank.

Visually, Firaxis felt it to be so important to have a singular vision for the game's look and feel that the design team enlisted a 17th-century painting by Peter Brueghel as their muse of sorts. Any time an artist on the team has a question about design or palette, they consult Brueghel's *Tower of Babel*. In Firaxis' minds, this will create a unified visual theme across the game. So significant is the painting, in fact, an adapted model of it can be seen in the opening movie.

Interestingly, the design team is avoiding the usage of cut-scenes and full-motion video as much as possible, which is a good thing. By the third time you've seen these clips—and in this type of game you see them a lot more than three times—you want to hit the Escape key. The designers know that cut scenes get old because they all played *CIVILIZATION*. For the artists and graphic designers on the project, *CIV* is not an abstract

What's In

- Multiplayer
- Diplomatic and economic victories
- Raw materials and trade
- Cultural expansion
- Borders and Zone of Control for swift units
- Great Leader units
- Armies

What's Out

- Supporting military units with shield units (it's only gold now)
- The city view
- Fundamentalism

What's Changing

- Health points for units
- The space race and game
- Advisors provide more useful info
- Tech tree (which can be queued up)
- Civlopedia
- Diplomacy is more complex and conversational

notion. It's an incredibly tangible experience. Given Sid Meier's attachment to playtesting, could it be any other way?

Must...Play...Test

The moment Firaxis inked the deal with Hasbro, Meier and his design team started playing CIV III. They replaced the art assets of ALPHA CENTAURI (Firaxis' last big strategy title) with crude CIVILIZATION-style placeholders, and modified the rules to reflect their design decisions for this new game.

For Meier, playing a game is the most critical aspect of its design. Without it, he argues, the original classic would never have achieved its lofty status. It's dogma at Firaxis—everyone plays as much as possible. People talk, revisions are made, and they play some more.

For this reason, many of the design elements are still in flux, which means that some of what you are reading about will be tweaked, changed, or even absent. Civilizations may or may not have inherent advantages. Ditto for the special units in the game. The American F-16 or the Roman Legion may have special powers, but not if Firaxis feels it unbalances the game.

Unfortunately the same holds true for the multiplayer game. For this reason, Firaxis isn't talking about that yet, but President and CEO Jeff Briggs promises "some really innovative gameplay" there.

At a moment's notice, advances (many, like Music Theory, are culturally oriented), extra wonders (possibilities include the Internet and a Great Canal that would link two oceans and provide revenue), and even the rules governing victory can all change. To save design time, art and sound assets for certain aspects of the game won't even be approached until they're in for sure.

"The original CIVILIZATION had hovercrafts and maps that were twice as big," Meier enthusiastically responds when pressed to explain his emphasis on playtesting. "But the more we played it, the more we realized that it's better to overcompress the gameplay than to undercompress it. We learned to keep the mid-game short so that the player is constantly juggling decisions. CIV is long, but it could be a lot longer."

Anyone familiar with Activision's take on CIVILIZATION knows exactly what he means. While an interesting reinterpretation of a Hall of Fame game, the middle and end portions of the two CALL TO POWER titles got too bogged down in tedium when they should have been racing to the end.

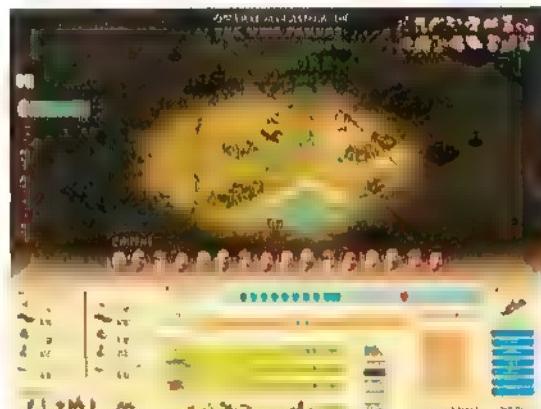
Meier knows the truth. The whole game is an open-ended sprint for the finish line. That's because for him, game design is an open-ended sprint for the finish line.

With any luck, that sprint will end this November or December.

CGW



Modeled after Firaxis CEO Jeff Briggs, the military adviser can give you tactically useful information.



Gone is the original game's slightly cumbersome city-management screen. Now you can move workers around and adjust your production levels from a single view.



Every Wednesday, Firaxis has an art meeting in which the designers go over all the various assets under development. Each unit in the game is 3D-modeled and will feature animations for moving, attacking, fidgeting, and death.



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MAY 2001

REVIEWS



As you can tell by flipping through any issue of *Computer Gaming World*, we use a wide variety of staff and freelance reviewers. While providing us with a line-up of top-notch writing talent to choose from, it also gives our reviewing voice a rather eclectic tone. Or so we thought.

In a recently posted article about computer gaming magazines on The Adrenaline Vault (www.vault.com), Bruce Rolston referred to CGW as the "grumpy old man of computer gaming" due to our frequently negative reviews. Well, kind sir, I must take umbrage with your crass characterization of us! Harrumph!

First, we're not grumpy, we're just not getting enough fiber. We'll see how your demeanor changes when you're up at 3:00am playing ONI for god-knows-what reason with a came asada super burrito camping in your duodenum and you can't decide if you should keep playing to the next godforsaken save point or go pray to the porcelain god to end your suffering. If some of these PR people would get on the ball and send

us some Metamucil instead of yet another XL black T-shirt we'll only wear on laundry day, maybe you'd see an extra half star getting loosened up here and there.

And old? Granted, Jeff Green is in his late 70's (don't believe that picture, it was taken in 1957 and colorized by Ted Turner), and Robert Coffey has this weird thing for afghans and Ben Gay, but the rest of us are mere pups. Why, we're so young, I dare say some of us rock and roll past 11:30 and party every other day.

And man? Well let me tell you, Thierry Nguyen and Alex Handy are hardly men and won't be considered so until they go through the sacred CGW Sun Vow ceremony, in which we build a smoke lodge in the testing lab, and they hang by eagle talons pierced through their nipples and watch every single episode of *Small Wonder* on tape loop.

What do you think? Are the CGW reviews too grumpy-old-mannish? If so, please call 1-800-EAT-S***, or just email me at tom_price@diff-davis.com, consumit! -Tom Price

MARCH REVIEWS

NAME	RATING
Clive Barker's Undying	★★★★★
NASCAR Racing	★★★★★
SimCoaster	★★★★★
America	★★★★★
Airfix Fighter	★★★★★
Chicken Run	★★★★★
Jagged Alliance 2: Unfinished Business	★★★★★
Stupid Invaders	★★★★★
Sea Dogs	★★★★★
Colin McRae Rally 2.0	★★★★★
Dave Mirra Freestyle BMX	★★★★★

HOW DO WE RATE?



Outstanding The rare game that gets it all right. A must-play.

Very Good Worthy of your time and money, but there are drawbacks.

Average Either an ambitious design with major flaws, or just vanilla.

Weak Seriously lacking in play value, poorly conceived, or just another clone.

Ahoy! The rare game that gets it all wrong. Pathetic. Counter material.

Back from
the grave
and ready
to party

Read Alive

HOUSES OF THE UNHOLY
With hellish creatures like the
ravaging hells, who the hell
wants to go home?

The first rule of torture isn't inflicting pain, but implying it. Display and describe your instruments of pain and let the mind of your subject do the real work, clouding with fear at the dark prospect of what horrors await them. The spectre of an unspeakable

uncertainty is infinitely more terrifying than the harsh truth of reality, however brutal.

It is in creating a similarly gripping, heart-clutching sense of fear that is the greatest accomplishment of

short of the end, *UNDYING* is still an unrelenting journey of dread that will leave you drowning in a pool of your own cold sweat.

I Hear Dead People

Like *SYSTEM SHOCK 2*, *UNDYING* is the sort of game that cries out to be played late at night, in a dark room, with the sound turned up — all the better to hear the snarls, moans, and haunting whispers that comprise the game's spine-tingling soundtrack. There's very little music yet the game is constantly scored by plaintively howling winds, sky-shattering peals of thunder, the muted laments of the long dead, and the bone-chilling sounds of *UNDYING*'s vicious bestiary. The game's few scripted events gain added shock value simply because you are kept in a constant state of near-panic.

The sounds are doubly effective thanks to the brilliant way *UNDYING* handles its monsters. Instead of loading the early levels with traditional cannon fodder, *UNDYING* unleashes Howlers upon you, large leaping

CLIVE BARKER'S UNDYING

Reviewed by Robert Coffey

CLIVE BARKER'S UNDYING, a single-player shooter set primarily in the sort of massive and foreboding European estate immortalized in countless classic horror films. Even though it runs out of gas a few levels

CGW RATED

PROS

Great sound, art, and design combine to create the scariest game in over a year.

CONS

Design lapses and the flagging conclusion detract from the otherwise riveting experience.



WE DON'T MEAN BASKETBALL

Surviving the earliest levels of *UNDYING* can be daunting. I recommend learning to "dribble" your enemies, particularly the Howlers. Use amplifiers to jack up your Ectoplasm spell, then arm the Gel'zabar Stone in your other hand. With practice, you can use the Stone to bounce your enemies away just before they hit you, all the while pounding away with the Ectoplasm. This should help you live long enough to get new weapons and spells.

Requirements: Pentium-II 400, 64MB RAM, 200MB hard drive space. Recommended Requirements: Pentium-III 500, 128MB RAM, 610MB hard drive space.

3D Support: Direct3D, Glide. Multiplayer Support: None

Publisher: Electronic Arts • Developer: Electronic Arts • \$45 • www.ea.com • ESRB Rating: Mature; animated blood, gore, and violence.



HOT SHOT Using your spells and weapons in tandem is crucial to strategy. Some items even interact — use a lightning spell to charge your spear gun and you can call forth a bolt from above for a nice one-shot kill.

dervishes, all tooth and claw, that can kill you and (literally) devour your head within seconds. After one encounter with one of these creatures, the soulless rasp of their distant howling will instantly set you on edge. You'll immediately scout the area ahead when suddenly they'll attack from behind, or above, or — maybe most maddening of all — not at all. But they're still out there... somewhere. Waiting to get you.

As scary as the Howlers are, it's almost a blessing that they don't usually attack in packs. In fact, you'll rarely be attacked in numbers during UNDYING — the game's monsters are so tough and scary on their own that the game doesn't need to force fear by stooping to such simple design tricks. Sluglike creatures teleport away from your assault in order to attack from behind, enormous floating horrors bombard you with fireballs before trying to suck you into their cruel maws; and (my favorite) the crow-like denizens of another dimension use a ranged attack to distort reality, leaving you reeling through the thick spinning air, unable to line up a shot as these bastards peck you to death.

Every creature packs a significant punch, not only causing large amounts of damage but literally knocking you for a loop, leaving you unsure of where you are, which way is up, and, most importantly, where the next attack is coming from. Fights in UNDYING aren't the nonstop adrenalin-pumping bloodbaths of other shooters as much as they are desperate battles for your life.

That is, until near the end when the journal entries driving the plot dry up and the game becomes a fairly straightforward shooter as you battle an army of uninspired spear-gunning brutes.

Clive Barker's Undying

And that rote finale is unfortunately indicative of a few design lapses that trip up UNDYING. While the game somehow finds a way to breathe life into hoary game environments like the haunted mansion and eerie otherworld, the game's approach to bosses is strictly SPACE INVADERS. Trap you in a small space and then let you pound on a seemingly unbeatable foe until you find the trick to beating him. The only thing saving the boss encounters is a nifty little game conceit where only your most powerful melee weapon can destroy the cursed family members tormenting you. In that way, the boss fights are pitched-up close struggles.

It's also odd that a game blessed with an elegant interface that makes wielding weapons in one hand while firing off spells with the other is saddled with a ludicrous save/restore system. After you die, you're forced to watch a death animation, and then the game reloads to the start of the level, forcing you to reload your latest save. And call me crazy, but at least there's some honor in dying at the hands of a foe you've fought valiantly. But dying because you didn't take the exactly right angle of that floating platform? That just sucks.

I expect the saving situation will be addressed in a patch, but I just can't figure out how a game that found a way to make fairly linear gameplay and a number of key hunts work, by and large, for it, could shoot itself so squarely in the foot.

Just as puzzling but infinitely more frustrating is the setup for the final boss: You defeat the last of the regular bosses, probably burning up a lot of health in the process; then you are teleported to a minuscule island for the final showdown without a chance to accumulate ammo and health, let alone just use the little remaining health you have to get ready. How can a game with design smart enough to let you customize your gameplay — by choosing which of your spells you'll increase in potency — be so shortsighted on more basic elements?

As aggravating as these shortcomings can be, they aren't enough to keep UNDYING from being the first must-play shooter of 2001. Turn off the lights, turn up the sound, and prepare for a scarily good time. **CGW**



READ IT AND WEEP Ghosts will prompt you to use your Scribe spell in order to reveal scenes from the past, or bloody warnings like this.



NOT AGAIN Not only are the boss battles generally routine, but you have to beat this goon three times in a row before he finally croaks.

YOU SCREAM FOR MORE SCREAMS

While many games have tried, few of them have succeeded in creating a palpable sense of terror. If UNDYING leaves you thirsting for more terror, try some of these titles:

SYSTEM SHOCK 2

Simply a masterpiece, **SYSTEM SHOCK 2** leaps to the top of the horror pack with a great storyline told through stellar voice-acting, terrifying creatures, and deep RPG/FPS gameplay. But what will stay with you is the terrifying sound of it, a symphony of tortured voices, all seeming to lurk just beyond the next corner.

HALF-LIFE

The chapter against which all others are measured, **HALF-LIFE** has a more frenetic, classically action-based style of play than UNDYING, but these battles are fought by some of the scariest, most deviously cunning and deliriously imagined monsters ever. Countless scripted events provide plenty of jolts, and keep you constantly off-balance.

SANITARIUM

This adventure game is a disturbing journey through the mind of a man who may or may not be completely insane. Genuinely moving at times, **SANITARIUM** has some of the most deliciously sick and twisted puzzles ever to grace an adventure game.

ALIEN VS. PREDATOR-GAME

This shooter provides three different styles of play, all of them scary as hell. Which is worse — seeing the red targeting dot on your heart nanoseconds before a Predator kills you, or muddling a corner to find a catastrophic, dark corridor packed with wall- and ceiling-climbing Aliens? Make sure you get AVP GOLD (or download the save-game patch), or you'll hate this game more than fear it.

I HAVE NO MOUTH AND I MUST SCREAM

With a story by Marlan Ellison, this adventure game caught up some of the most disturbing ideas ever digitized. If you're lucky, you just might find it in a bargain bin.

You'll swear
you smell tire rubber
and exhaust fumes

High Octane



CHOOSE AN INTIMIDATOR DALE EARNHARDT A familiar scene at any Daytona event, The Intimidator is leading this race. His untimely death at this year's Daytona 500 was a sad day in NASCAR history.

The realistic NASCAR RACING series has put Papyrus on the podium as the king of racing simulations. Taking the physics model from GRAND PRIX LEGENDS and tweaking it to simulate a 3500-pound stock car continues Papyrus' tradition of producing

the most hardcore, realistic simulations ever to grace a computer screen. In

fact, they have done their homework so well that even the most die-hard simulation gurus will have a hard time getting around the track without hours of practice. With all this realism and attention to detail, NASCAR RACING 4 brings home the true essence of NASCAR and what racing is all about.

NASCAR RACING 4

Reviewed by Wade "Sensei" Hermes

The biggest, most noticeable improvement is the unflinching realism of the physics model. Dale Earnhardt, Jr. was quoted as saying that it felt exactly like his Winston Cup car on Sunday minus the G-forces and the smell of exhaust fumes. Braking and accelerating with finesse is more essential than ever to making your way around the track. Accelerate too fast, and your wheels break loose and go spinning. Brake too hard, and you'll lock up your tires and slide straight into the wall. And if you're at a super speedway and you slam your brakes to stop after you've lost control, all or some of your tires will be flat once you stop spinning.

You can also get airborne and end up on your roof, but that event has been better tuned in the game engine. When you get airborne you'll stay closer to the ground. The effect of all this movement is now reflected in your cockpit view, bouncing up and down and back and forth with every bump of the track as well as with braking and accelerating.

The graphics are so astounding, you'll be tempted to watch an entire race with the replay feature. It's almost like watching it on television. The smoke effects are the best yet, dissipating very slowly and realistically. On a small track like

Bristol, you can go two laps and still see faint signs of smoke from a previous wreck. Pit crews are a little blocky but are fully animated and perform all the movements of a real crew. On my Pentium-III 933 with 256MB of RAM and a 64MB GeForce2, I was able to run this game with all the eye candy turned on, in 1600x1200 resolution. With a full field of 43 cars, I didn't see any frame-rate hit.

An increased attention to official NASCAR rules means you can no longer pass on green flag starts before the start/finish line. And you really have to watch the way you merge into traffic: If you don't stay below the blend line, you'll have a stop and go black flag. There are many more penalties, so make sure you're up on the official rules or you can expect to be making extra stops during the race.

Single Race, Testing, Championship, and multiplayer options haven't changed, but the interface has been redone for easier navigation. Every track from last year's circuit is authentically reproduced, and three tracks that have had licensing issues in the past – Pocono, Indianapolis, and Daytona – are finally available. In multiplayer mode, there is full online racing support for up to 43 drivers (a complete NASCAR field) that includes the ability to log on and locate servers and other drivers. All the real-world car manufacturers are present including Dodge, which is returning to NASCAR this year.



UP ON THE FLIP SIDE The new physics model will give you a whole new perspective of the world, if you aren't careful as well as patient.

COW RATED

PROS

Incredibly realistic recreation of America's favorite motor sport.

CONS

A very steep learning curve keeps the game from being accessible to many; a couple of minor bugs need to be fixed.

Requirements: Pentium-II 266 MHz, 64MB RAM, 8X CD-ROM, 12MB Direct3D-compatible video card, DirectX version 8.0. Recommended Requirements: Pentium-III 800 MHz, 128MB RAM, GeForce or Voodoo 5 video card, Direct3D-compatible video card, DirectSound-compatible sound card, DirectInput-compatible game controller.

3D Support: Direct 3D, OpenGL. Multiplayer Support: LAN (2-8 players).

Publisher: Sierra Studios • Developer: Papyrus Racing Games • \$59 • www.sierrastudios.com • ESRB Rating: Everyone



AN OLYMPIC EVENT This bug in the game simulates a bobsled racing competition. To win a race or to get the pole, just floor it and drive along the outside wall.



INTIMIDATOR-STYLE, IT ISN'T This may look like an Earnhardt move, but it's the overly aggressive computer-controlled cars ramming into you if you're not up to speed.

dialled in and you're running faster, gradually turn up the strength to 100 percent.

Bobsledding in NASCAR

The game does have one major bug, but it doesn't really affect offline racing unless you're a cheater at heart. The friction coding for the walls has been toned down so that when you rub up against the wall, you no longer stick to it until you are slow enough to get free. Instead, you can actually side up to the wall, put the pedal to the metal, and drive the outside wall around the turns to pass all the cars on the track to win the race. On small tracks, you can win the pole position every time by doing this. Self-control defeats this bug in single player, but it's a serious issue in online racing since many

human drivers just can't resist the temptation to win at all costs. If online racing is important to you, you may want to hold off until a patch is released to fix this.

NASCAR RACING 4 is an incredible re-creation of what it actually takes to race in a NASCAR event, an exact simulation that succeeds to the point of being almost too difficult for even the experienced driver. There are a few driving aids in the setup area to help you, but these will be of interest only to an arcade-style racer (if that sounds like you, then check out NASCAR HEAT).

But if you're the kind of sim freak willing to spend hours and hours setting up your car, someone able to appreciate the difficulty and skill it takes just to finish a race, then NASCAR RACING 4 will give you the satisfaction and sense of accomplishment you seek – as well as a new appreciation for what real-world NASCAR racing is all about. **CGW**

NASCAR Crew Chief Needed!

Since the physics model is so true to life, you are going to have to spend a lot of time in the garage to make that car feel nice to drive. If you don't know the difference between a spring and a shock, don't worry – because Papyrus has redone the garage and has a good online help dialogue. Just keep the mouse cursor on a certain adjustment and it will give you a description of what that adjustment does and how to make general improvements to the car's handling. There are a few pre-made setups included with each track to get you going, but I found them to be far too unstable to suit my driving style. I was forced to make my own setup just to keep the car under me. This mode is where the game might turn off some less experienced gamers. Remember, this is a simulation designed to re-create actual NASCAR racing – so be prepared to become your own mechanic.

And without a stable car, you won't be able to race against the computer-controlled cars. Even considering how good the AI cars are, they will plow right through you if you are too slow. This isn't a bug – it's ruthlessness. When starting out, lower the strength down to 85 percent, and you'll be running at approximately the same speed as the highly competitive AI. Once you get your car's setup properly



HOLD ON TIGHT AND PRAY That's all you can do at super speedways when you see this all-too-familiar scenario. The incredible graphics show off the new smoke effects, and the wrecks look more realistic than ever before. The graphics are so sharp that driving from the driver's seat lets you enjoy all the striking visuals the sim offers, while getting a true driver's perspective to boot.

SIM THEME PARK sequel succeeds the good old-fashioned way

Dear Mr. Disney

Mr. Disney:

Now I know how you feel. Well, *I* felt. Actually, I guess you could still feel this way. Anyway, despite some fundamental differences (I have no problem with beards or goatees, for instance) I now understand what made you tick — at least when you were first building your empire.

See, ever since this lazy old geezer charged me with becoming his heir in SIMCOASTER, I've become quite enamored with tracing your professional footsteps. Some call it stalking the dead. I prefer to call it...well, that's really a whole different story.

Back to my point. I know your secret of success: obsessive, slightly-Machiavellian planning. Shockingly, it's not very fun at first. As you built Disneyland, then Disneyworld, then EuroDisney, then Disneyland in Tokyo (I know, I know — you were "dead" for the last two), you simply repeated patterns you had already mastered.

Thankfully, SIMCOASTER made

running your life quite approachable. I started with a simple park. As I got more experienced and met more challenges, I was given access to other parks. It was all quite exciting. The only problem is that I really couldn't tell the Land of Innovation from the Polar Zone or Arabian Nights. Aside from varying climates, they're all essentially the same.

The similarities don't stop

there. Even the various challenges that my annoying co-workers threw at me seemed identical. Initially, I felt these challenges were an engaging and even ingenious way of teaching me how to run my park while providing a much-needed goals-and-rewards structure. But when you boil it down, shrewd theme park moguls like you and I know that whether it's hot dogs or balloons, you handle an oversupply of either in exactly the same way.

Sometimes I wished that my co-workers would hit me with more elaborate, spontaneous challenges that truly tested my reactionary planning, but I guess that's the biz, right? This would explain why I am destined for greatness and they aren't. And I have to admit that SIMCOASTER is far more engaging because of



LOOK AT ME! Running your own theme park isn't as glamorous as it looks. Trust me.

them than SIM THEME PARK ever was.

But I digress. Ach, is running a theme park hard work! I managed my new inheritance by constantly asking myself, "What would Walt do?" As a consequence, my theme parks blossomed into the kind of empire I think you'll appreciate when you're defrosted in the year 2083.

For I am manipulative and predatory. I oversalt my fries to make kids thirsty, and I add glaciers of ice to my drinks to increase their perceived value. When it rains, I pump up the price of umbrellas, figuring that if people flew into my park by helicopter, they could damn well afford the umbrellas. I design my park in such a way that visitors can't escape. Not that they'd want to.

Although it was kind of tedious at the start, I realized that the most interesting aspect of running your own theme park is what happens after you've settled down. That's where the fun starts, isn't it? Where everything opens up — like reaching the peak of Splash Mountain.

Once I had passed safety and cleanliness inspections and was rewarded with golden tickets — allowing me to open special rides and expand my parks — I was able to focus on the fun part of being a theme park mogul. That part, quite simply, consists of researching new rides, custom-building new coasters (a task I found fairly difficult), and making sure the money keeps rolling in.

Then I simply enjoyed: strolling the park, riding the rides, even tearing down old parts of the park to make way for new rides. But I guess you already know all that.

Yes, I feel closer to you now than ever before. From our frequent conversations, I know you feel the same.

Say hi to Howard Hughes for me when you get a chance. He's next. **CGW**

SIMCOASTER

REVIEWED BY: Doctor Jones

CGW RATED

PROS

Some structure and a rudimentary storyline add some direction to SIM THEME PARK, the game's predecessor.



CONS

The structured gameplay can get a little tedious early on—but you have to play through it if you want to open other lands.

Requirements: Pentium-II 233, 32MB RAM, 415MB hard drive space. Recommended Requirements: Pentium-II 400, 64MB RAM, 32MB video card.
3D Support: Direct 3D (required). Multiplayer Support: None

Publisher: Electronic Arts • Developer: Bullfrog • \$48 • www.simcoaster.com • ESRB Rating: Everyone

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Wasted setting, waste of time

Age of Bumpkins

The real-time-strategy game is now so entrenched a gaming institution that developers fear to enter the genre without offering some innovative ideas or features. So why'd they even bother making AMERICA? The only thing innovative in German developer Data Becker's real-time-strategy clone is its unique setting in the 19th-century American Southwest. The rest is pure copycat.

Clone on the Range

In all ways, this game is the most straightforward of clones, instantly familiar to anyone who has played AGE OF EMPIRES II. You tend fields for food, chop wood for buildings, and mine gold for advanced units. It even looks very similar. The chief difference is that there are far fewer units and options. The game isn't as sophisticated or deep, but at least it benefits from being familiar.

AMERICA

Reviewed by Elliott Chan

AMERICA has four sides for play, each with its own campaign. These campaigns don't really take advantage of the setting or history, as there is no real story to link the missions together. Scenarios in the campaign often feel disjointed, while the missions themselves are straightforward, and like the rest of

the game, old news. You're either defending yourself from an enemy, or attacking an enemy. On some occasions you have to use stealth, but after a few missions the game becomes monotonous.

Cowboys and Indians

The game's four sides have their differences, based largely on stereotypes. The Native Americans regenerate and have spells, courtesy of their medicine man unit. The settlers can produce guns and have more powerful units overall. The deeply religious Mexicans have nuns and priests that can heal units and convert enemy units. The outlaws live on hard liquor instead of crops and are great thieves and assassins.

You'd expect the sides to be balanced by virtue of their different abilities, but that's not always the case. The imbalance is most evident when playing the Native American side against the settlers. The low-level settler units are clearly stronger than their Native American counterparts, and the camouflage abilities of the Native Americans are



LOOK FAMILIAR? Once the novelty of the unique setting wears off, you're left with a weak clone of AGE II.



REVENGE! Although unit-to-unit the natives are weaker than the settlers, strength in numbers still reigns supreme.

virtually nullified — the lowest-level settler military unit, which any settler player will have in abundance, can detect cloaked units. The medicine man spells take a while to cast, and the requisite chanting and dancing are a dead giveaway to the enemy, who can easily move his or her units out of range. Once the novelty of playing Wild West caricatures wears off, you'll find that the sides are nowhere near as interesting as those in AGE II, RED ALERT 2, or SACRIFICE.

Apart from its mediocre gameplay, AMERICA is plagued with problems. System requirements call for a Pentium 266 or higher, but it ran poorly on a P-II 400, skipping and jerking when scrolling the screen. The interface isn't very refined. You can't queue up farms; you can't issue waypoints for movement; the hot-keys aren't intuitive and aren't visible onscreen; the pathfinding is bad; trying to mount horses isn't always automatic even when it should be; and, it's difficult to tell units apart. It's also hard to select specific units, as the cursor isn't precise, so that when you think you're clicking on a unit, you actually select a nearby unit. Obviously, the production values aren't that great. The mission briefings are poorly done, with a static image, scrolling text, and uninspired voice-acting. Sometimes, the game even spells Americans as "Americans" or cannon as "canon."

Although the setting in AMERICA is interesting, the game itself isn't. If you're into the 19th-century Wild West setting and history, skip this game and read some good books instead. **CGW**

COW RATED

PARTS

The Wild West setting is novel and promising.

CONS

Bad performance, bad stereotypes, and bad cloneplay make for a bad game.



PALEFACE ESCAPE LIGHTNING The bolts look impressive, but enemies have plenty of warning to just move out of the way.

Requirements: Pentium 266 MMX, 64MB RAM, 350MB hard drive space. Recommended Requirements: Pentium 300 MMX, 128MB RAM, 650 MB hard drive space. 3D Support: None. Multiplayer Support: LAN (2-8 players).

Publisher: Data Becker • Developer: Data Becker • \$30 • www.databecker.com • ESRB Rating: Everyone; animated violence.

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A worthy successor to SID MEIER'S PIRATES

Ship Shape

It's been far too long since computer gamers were given the opportunity to sail the seas, plundering and pillaging as lawless scalawags. While role-playing game (RPG) fans have been beset by games with substantial fantasy medieval settings, there have been surprisingly few chances to indulge in such historical, sociopathic mischief. Akella's SEA DOGS capably remedies that omission. Like its spiritual predecessor, SID MEIER'S PIRATES, SEA DOGS fashions a hybrid mix of individually simple gaming elements into a novel and intriguing gaming experience. You will, however, have to supply your own parrot.

Sea Dogs of War

While there's a skeletal plot and some basic role-playing elements to motivate would-be buccaneers, SEA DOGS is primarily a simulator of 17th-century naval combat, and gameplay principally consists of

blasting and boarding random targets of opportunity. The emphasis on naval combat isn't surprising nor is the fact that the combat model is well polished, since developer Akella also recently created AGE OF SAIL II. Players are able to freely explore the beautifully detailed environments of SEA

SEA DOGS

BY JEFF COOPER

DOGS as either a noble privateer in the service of any of three European powers, or as a self-interested freebooter, questing for fame and plunder

The game models 21 different ships from the era, assigning each an appropriate rating in various characteristics such as capacity to lug cargo and crew, speed, and maneuverability. Your first small trading vessel, a Pink, sports a name guaranteed to dispel any delusions of grandeur that your neophyte captain might possess, but you'll eventually be able to command massive Man O' Wars that are decked out with almost 100 imposing cannons. Early in the game you'll have to become proficient using the four types of cannon shells in order to slow down vessels and defeat your numerous and frequently more powerful enemies. Enemy AI is only challenging until you gain access to mid-sized ships, since at that point you'll already have enough firepower to send most foes to Davy Jones' locker and be able to evade more formidable adversaries.

By the time you're commanding an Armored Frigate, you'll be able to easily scuttle entire fleets of opponents—even though there still are a half dozen ships with more substantial weaponry. But combat is still entertaining as you'll need so much money to support your crew that you'll have to try to capture more ships intact, requiring you to dangerously maneuver within point-blank range of enemy cannons.

COW RATED

PLUSES

Entertaining simulation of 17th-century naval combat, with convincing wave effects and crisp, detailed graphics; nonlinear exploration.

CONS

Beyond the naval combat, there's not a lot of depth.



SWORD LIGHTING Sword lighting isn't well explained in the manual, but you'll need to become adept in order to succeed. There's no need to use faints against the AI opponents.

A Simple Tale

SEA DOGS has lots of inspired graphical touches, such as the manner in which water clarity varies, the realistic glare emitted by the sun, and the fearsome-looking sharks that occasionally rise from the depths. Waves move in a realistic manner and look fantastic—they're probably the game's most impressive graphical feature. Storms also look convincing, although their only notable impact on gameplay is to reduce your range of vision. Each of the game's numerous islands is visually unique, making even random exploration rewarding—which is fortunate given the game's shallow plot.

Your character starts the game in an English town after escaping from Spanish captivity. While it's easiest to ally yourself with the English from the outset, instead you can choose to fight for the French or to buy amnesty to be able to sail under the Spanish flag. As the son of a notorious pirate, you can also elect to shun the



TOWN AHOY Spyglasses allow you to learn more about your opponents, but you can also use them just to get a better look at the spiffy graphics.

Requirements: Pentium-II 233, 64 MB RAM, 30 card, 850 MB hard drive space. Recommended Requirements: Pentium-II 300, 128 MB RAM,

3D Support: Direct 3D. Multiplayer Support: None

Publisher: Bethesda Softworks Inc. • Developer: Akella • \$40 • seadogs.bethsoft.com • ESRB Rating: Teen



VIVE LA BURNING FRENCH FORT! To effectively attack forts, make sure that you have at least a Class 4 vessel, use bombs, and attack from maximum range.

European powers and partner with the pirate brotherhood. You can shift allegiances during the course of the game in order to sample a greater variety of quests. Completing quests and defeating ships and fortifications will allow your character to gain experience levels and access to more powerful ships. With each new experience level, your character will also be able to allocate a few points to any of nine attributes, eight of which affect your ship's proficiency in battle. Level advancement is relatively slow compared to other RPGs, but you can supplement your attribute scores by hiring officers for sizable fees.

Towns are populated with well-animated NPCs who either impart quests or mutter a sound bite or two. You can't see the crew members on your ship, however, which makes the otherwise graphically detailed crafts look like ghost ships. NPCs will assign you simple quests, which essentially consist of logging cargo, escorting vessels, or destroying ships or fortifications. The game's plot is advanced solely through completing a handful of missions for your allied nation. You can ignore the quests altogether and content yourself with preying on other vessels or ferrying trading goods, but it's disappointing that gameplay never intensifies during the course of the game.

The largest scripted battles involve only a handful of ships, and you can never recruit more than a couple of powerful allied vessels. The game badly needs a concluding, epic fleet battle in place of the brief, anticlimactic cinematic that is inflicted upon successful players.

Russkie Pirates?

While *SEA DOGS* wasn't developed internally by publisher Bethesda, it would have been greatly enhanced if its plot had more of the depth Bethesda injected into the company's somewhat graphically and topically similar Elder Scrolls adventure game, *REDGUARD*. *SEA DOGS* was created by Russian developer, Akella, and the transition to the American gaming public isn't perfect. There are dialogue scripting errors, and a number of conversation threads seem nonsensical, as if the exchanges were translated literally without accounting for linguistic nuances. More significantly, the game's interface and controls are pretty rudimentary compared to those typically released for this market, and the game notably lacks a tutorial.

This omission makes the game needlessly difficult at its outset, particularly since there's no way to practice sword fighting, which you'll have to master to board ships and capture forts. As you travel between islands, you'll constantly run into encounters, some of which can't be avoided. Since you're initially limited to piloting relatively slow trading vessels, your pirating career will be destined to detour to the reloading screen if you randomly run into a dreadnought.

Unless you're very patient and determined, it's difficult to make sustainable income solely from trading goods, so most players will opt for a more lucrative career capturing prize ships and their cargoes.

Since your monetary demands are constant, it's too easy to commit yourself to a lengthy journey that'll result in you running out of money, eventually causing your crew to mutiny — which immediately ends the game.

Early in its development, *SEA DOGS* was going to include fantasy elements such as spells and sea monsters. While giant squids and other creatures from pirate lore could have been welcome additions, it was a good design decision to exclude fireball-hurling wizards; the more realistic setting is one of the game's strengths. There are other venues for dueling sorcerers, but almost none for cannon-wielding corsairs. While its plot and RPG elements lack depth, *SEA DOGS* does a great job depicting 17th-century naval combat in a stylish manner. For that, we hoist our grog in salute. **CGW**



I NOW PRONOUNCE YOU...PIRATE KING! There are only a few brief cinematics to reward your achievements, and they're anticlimactic.



CAP'N, THERE'RE FOUR SUNS! Or one really bright orb and some lens flare. While you can sail your vessel directly from the deck, this third-person perspective is often more practical.



CLUB, CLUB! As this ship descends to a watery demise, my ship can scour the surface for prize cargo.

STUPID INVADERS is stupid—but in a good way

The Dimwits From Deep Space

If you've been hankering for more stinky farts, lively belches, and blatant sexual innuendo in your gaming experiences, your search is over. STUPID INVADERS, based on the animated TV series *Space Goofs*, is a raucous, raunchy adventure game, with the most crap—literally!—of any game to date, along with plenty of unidentifiable green ooze, flatulence-induced explosions, and a whole lot of toilets. If you're the type of person who despises toilet humor, read no further. But if, like me, your tolerance is higher, you'll get a kick out of STUPID INVADERS.

Obviously and lovingly inspired by classic LucasArts adventures like *DAY OF THE TENTACLE*, STUPID INVADERS tells the rather ridiculous story of five outlandish aliens named Etno, Candy, Bud, Stereo, and Gorgious, who have crashed their spaceship onto Earth. While

working to repair the ship, the aliens shack up in a bizarre abandoned house. Meanwhile, an evil scientist, Dr. Sakarin, has become aware of the aliens and has sent a goon to collect both them and their spaceship for his fiendish experiments. It's up to you to help this motley group of aliens evade and outsmart the evil doctor and

his henchmen, so they can return to their home planet.

The world of STUPID INVADERS is beautifully rendered by impressive, crisp, and colorful 3D graphics, so even if the fart jokes don't appeal to you, the game is great to look at. However, this doesn't hide the somewhat clumsy and less-than-intuitive interface lurking beneath. It's fairly common to get an alien stuck while leading it around with the mouse, resulting in a minor (but still annoying) click-fest to get the alien moving again. Also, I was somewhat irked by the fact that the inventory can only be accessed by pressing the spacebar, which often needed two whacks before bringing up the screen. The right mouse button, which I would have preferred to use for inventory, is used to toggle—maybe twice in the whole game—between multiple actions that can be performed on a particular object.

But maybe the game's biggest problem is the sheer number of ways you can get killed—something, ironically, that LucasArts adventures have religiously avoided in their adventure games for years. Even the most innocent of actions, such as trying to pick up an object

or open a door, can bring about the very untimely death of your alien, especially if you haven't been very prudent about saving your game. On the positive side, the beautiful (and usually funny) cut-scenes resulting from your death are worth watching, as are all the game's cut-scenes. Save often, and you won't smack yourself in the face when you realize how far you have to backtrack.

STUPID INVADERS gets lots of points, in general, for its absolutely first-rate production. The game is one of the most visually impressive comic adventure games in years, the music is suitably cartoony and catchy, and the

STUPID INVADERS

www.stupid-invaders.com

COW RATED



PROS

Lush, colorful graphics; outrageous comedy.

CONS

A somewhat flawed interface.

Requirements: Pentium-II 233 MHz, 16 MB RAM, 8X CD-ROM, DirectX-compatible sound and video cards. Multiplayer Support: None

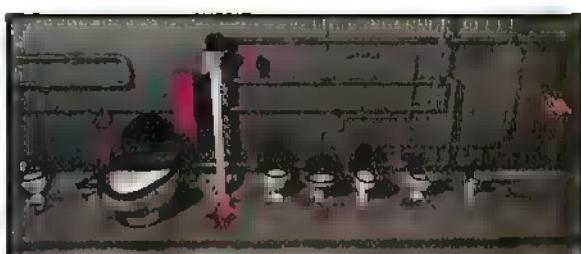
Publisher: UbiSoft Entertainment • Developer: Xilam • \$30 • www.stupid-invaders.com • ESRB Rating: Teen



PENCHANT FOR THE EASILY AMUSED Bud could just stare at that dripping sink for hours.



ALIEN COUCH POTATOES The aliens waste away in front of the television as they wait for their ship to be repaired.



BOOTY CALL Aliens really do come in all shapes and sizes. You'll see a lot of these devices throughout STUPID INVADERS, for better or worse.

voice-acting (featuring some of the actors from *The Simpsons* and *Ren & Stimpy*) is remarkable. Just be sure you're the type who enjoys vulgar bodily noises and uncouth sexual jokes before you buy, or you may feel like you just flushed your \$30 down the toilet. But fans of gross and stupid humor will find STUPID INVADERS to be a raunchy good time. CGW



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JAGGED ALLIANCE 2: UNFINISHED BUSINESS

So you like your games extra-difficult, huh? Step right this way, Brainiac.

Sir-Tech has a special treat for you. JAGGED ALLIANCE 2: UNFINISHED BUSINESS is the even-more-hardcore follow-up to their hardcore strategy title, and what a brain-bleeder it is. UNFINISHED BUSINESS is, in fact, the perfect subtitle for this game, because only the most dedicated fans of the original are likely to make their way to the bitter end.

SirTech calls the game a "mini-sequel," and that's about right. It's a stand-alone product, picking up where JA2 left off — but it's much more scaled down than the previous game (and kudos to Interplay for rightly budget-pricing it at \$20). Once again, you create a party of mercenary thugs (either from scratch or imported from the previous game) to do battle — in old-school, 2D, turn-based glory — against an evil enemy with more guns and better aim than you.

Whereas the earlier game was a complex combination of resource management and tactical combat, this time it's all about the combat. Period. You have no economy to manage, you don't have to train your mercs, and you don't recruit militia or defend the sectors you've captured. Also gone is JA2's open-ended, freeform structure, in which every gamer would approach the capturing and managing of sectors in a different fashion. From the moment UNFINISHED BUSINESS begins, you are basically funneled from one sector to another, in surprisingly (and disappointingly) linear fashion.

The battles — there are 20 new sectors in all — are longer and far tougher this time, as you are constantly outnumbered. Even in the novice setting, there is no ramping up time at all; this game starts kicking your ass from the very first (well, second — after the copter crash) sector. Real masochists can make play even tougher with timed turns (how I

played it), or in "Iron Man" mode, which doesn't allow you to save mid-battle — a mode apparently designed for alien-human hybrid superbeings.

The combat is essentially the same as in JA2, requiring careful, meticulous planning and movement. A few nice tweaks, such as overlays for line-of-sight and available cover, are welcome improvements to what is already a fun and rewarding system. Every victory feels like a major accomplishment, which is a good thing. But the downside this time is that it's simply exhausting, and with nothing else to this game but the combat, UNFINISHED BUSINESS is just too prohibitively difficult to recommend to anyone but the already converted. For dedicated JA-heads, however, the cheap price (which also includes a rudimentary map builder) makes it, if not a must-buy, then a might-as-well-buy. —Jeff Green

Genre: Strategy • Publisher: Interplay • Developer: SirTech • \$20 • www.interplay.com • ESRB Rating: Teen; animated blood, gore, and violence.



CHICKEN RUN

Genre: Action/Adventure • Publisher: Eidos Interactive Limited • Developer: Blitz Games Ltd. • \$30 • www.eidosinteractive.com • ESRB Rating: Everyone; comic mischief.

CHICKEN RUN is a great escape...if you consider mini-games to be an important aspect of gaming.

If you're looking for a more substantial gaming experience, however, odds are there isn't enough meat on this bird to satisfy you.

As a chicken named Ginger, you are on

mission to escape from Tweedy Farm. You must help your feathered squad find a myriad of items around the farm and, like MacGyver, put them together to coordinate your great escape.

The mini-games offer enough difficulty to keep the action challenging, but not frustrating. Driving them is the game's offbeat humor — where you fire chickens through windows or over water hazards, for example. The Hen at Work game requires you to synchronize with Mr. Tweedy's tools so he won't notice you building a flying machine: Press commands in time with the beat, and you've got a poultry-centric pseudo-DANCE DANCE REVOLUTION.

Ironically, running is the drawback in CHICKEN RUN. When going from room to room, the poor camera angles make it difficult to see your enemies. This makes the on-screen radar unfairly crucial to spotting items and dogs as you roam past the fences and searchlights.

Short and easy once you know where everything is, CHICKEN RUN loses its appeal quickly. But it will keep your little cousins busy if you ever have to babysit. —Wen Laws



DAVE MIRRA FREESTYLE BMX

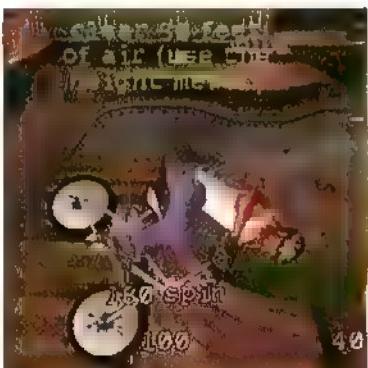
While BMX is often coupled with its "extreme" brother, skateboarding, the fact remains that it has yet to become as mainstream. Nevertheless, that didn't stop Acclaim, THQ, and Activision from releasing BMX titles for console systems.

DAVE MIRRA FREESTYLE BMX is a lot

like a skateboard game, but the tricks have different names, the locations are different, and the riders will only be recognized by people who are seriously into BMX. Dave Mirra and his Haro teammate Ryan Nyquist are the best-known riders in the sport, so anyone who's into BMX should definitely dig this game.

It boasts 12 levels that focus on vert, dirt, and street riding, and includes spots like the San Jose Ramp Club, Mirra's own Eastwood Ramp Park, and Camp Woodward's "Lot B." As an actual BMXer, I expected more realism — dirt courses that featured one big drop-in, and a three or four double rhythm section. Furthermore, the spacing of the obstacles makes the game feel choppy at times as it lacks the "flow" that is crucial in BMX. In many ways, the game seems to move too fast.

The game's multiplayer modes are fun for a while, but the game's Proquest career mode, along with Free Ride and Session, are significantly more compelling. With music by bands like Cypress Hill, Sublime, and Rancid, the game definitely sports that



BMX video feel. It isn't perfect, but BMX enthusiasts will have a good ride.
—William O'Neal

Genre: Sports • Publisher: Acclaim • Developer: Z-Axis • \$40 • www.acclaim.com • ESRB Rating: Everyone

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COLIN MCRAE RALLY 2.0

They say reflexes make the man. Actually, nobody says that. But if they did, COLIN MCRAE RALLY 2.0 might well be the ultimate test of gamer machismo. One year after the release of the original MCRAE, Codemasters has unleashed a frenetic sequel that examines the outer limits of hand-eye coordination and vehicular control. Though ultra-hardcore realism enthusiasts may be less than contented with its somewhat forgiving car physics and component failure rate,

MCRAE 2.0 is nevertheless an exhilarating and challenging solo drive that could prematurely end the life of more than one innocent joystick.

In typical European rally fashion, the game is essentially a series of perilous time trials. MCRAE 2.0 seats the player in a race-prepared production sports car — such as a Peugeot 206 or Ford Focus — and requires the negotiation of long and outrageously twisty bits of back road. Apart from your co-driver, who incessantly conveys the direction and degree of upcoming turns, you are alone on the track and racing solely against the clock and the posted times of your peers.

Unlike its chief competitor, EA's MOBIL 1 RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP, MCRAE 2.0 is a true ride on the wild side. Each sub-five-minute "stage" is a journey to roller-coaster hell. Each jittery roadway is wide and

accommodating yet peppered with off-track obstacles, squirrely shoulders, and plenty of four-wheel drifting opportunities. And every one of its half-dozen, real-life vehicles are so danged reactive to the game's variable weather conditions and collection of racing surfaces, you'll never quite know how to handle what lies ahead until you get there.

Even those who've seen MCRAE in its original incarnation will be impressed with Codemasters' recipe this time around. Though the fundamentals remain unchanged, virtually every aspect has been enhanced. The number of individual stages has been effectively doubled from 50 to 92. The graphics are brighter and slightly more detailed, with special attention paid to roadside vegetation, ambient lighting and the dramatic deterioration of your car. The once-unattractive menu interfaces are suddenly slick and pretty, the garage and repair shops more involving, and sound effects gritty and realistic.

That being said, MCRAE 2.0 does blow the occasional chunk. Imagine, if you will, the new multiple car "Arcade" mode, a grand failure in which vehicles transpose and merge through one another like fluffy

clouds on a sunny day. Or the game's annoying fascination with locked tracks, mouse-less menus, and archaic Internet multiplayer support. Perhaps worst of all, Codemasters has killed off the original's Rally School, a wonderfully instructive interactive-tutorial that was perfect for beginners.

In real life, rallying is a grueling, protracted exercise. If that's what sparks your plug, you'd best turn to EA's MOBIL 1. But for the sheer delight of exploring the relationship between human and joystick, few solo driving games strike such a perfect balance between arcade fun and simulation challenge as this one does. —Gord Goble

Genre: Racing • Publisher: Codemasters • Developer: Codemasters • \$40 • www.codemastersusa.com • ESRB Rating: Everyone



AIRFIX DOGFIGHTER

Like a German FW 190 swooping in under the radar, AIRFIX DOGFIGHTER ambushed us but good. We had never heard of the little model flier that lets you dogfight WWII aircraft in a virtual house (like we did when we were eight). It turns out Airfix is a German model company that's been churning out plastic and glue kits for nearly 50 years. Now you know where they got the idea.

The concept is simple and totally engaging. Players choose sides, Allies or Axis, and then hop into a 1:72 model of a World War II

fighter to embark on a series of missions. The rest of the forces involved in the war are on the same 1:72 scale. The "battlegrounds," however, are actual size. Dogfights take place in bathrooms, under beds, around the pool, and even in the flooded basement. There are U-boats in the tub, Sherman tanks on the counter, and Mustangs taking off from hidden bases under the stairs. It makes for some excellent reenactments of the best make-believe battles I ever fought in my

room as a kid.

The flight model is extremely simple and forgiving. If you've ever played TOY COMMANDER on the Dreamcast, you'll feel right at home here: The controls are almost exactly the same. Deft pilots can pull off some fabulously impossible moves, such as the famous Handy maneuver: Smacking into a wall head-on, then turning in place and meeting your enemy face to face.

AIRFIX also includes an editor. The house is static — it can't be changed/modified — but within it you can rearrange furniture, pictures, enemies, and so on. You can actually get quite creative with the objects available. One included multiplayer level divides the first floor of the house into two separate floors through strategic table placement.

Alas, there are some major shortcomings that detract from the experience. What flight sim could survive our modern world without proper joystick support? None. But that's exactly what kind of joystick support AIRFIX has: None. While there allegedly is joystick support included, I was unable to get it to work with even the simplest of Microsoft



slicks. Also, the campaign mode is a bit short — only 10 missions per side. Finally, what fun is a game filled with models if you can't get a cheap buzz off the glue fumes?

But with the fabulous house editor, paint shop, and multiplayer support, this game will still be fun long after you've beaten both campaigns. Just wear some finger covers. All that keyboard flying will tire out your tendons. —Alex Handy

Genre: Action • Publisher: Paradox Entertainment • Developer: UDS • \$30 • www.dogfighter.net • ESRB Rating: Everyone

RPG PC

Adventurers, your worlds are about to change...

The days of 2-Dimensional Role Playing Games are coming to an end. The next generation of PC adventures is almost here.

Incredible new 3-Dimensional RPG's like *Neverwinter Nights* and *Pool of Radiance: Ruins of Myth Drannor* will soon arrive on your PC. They will bring stunning graphics and vast new 3D worlds, but they will require much more power than today's 2D games do.

Is your PC ready to play in them?

Before any new adventure you must arm yourself with the best weapons available. To get the most out of these or any other PC games with demanding graphics you need a PC with serious firepower. You need a PC designed for gaming, built by a company that understands the needs of gamers. When the games are ready for you, your PC must be ready for them. You need Falcon Northwest.

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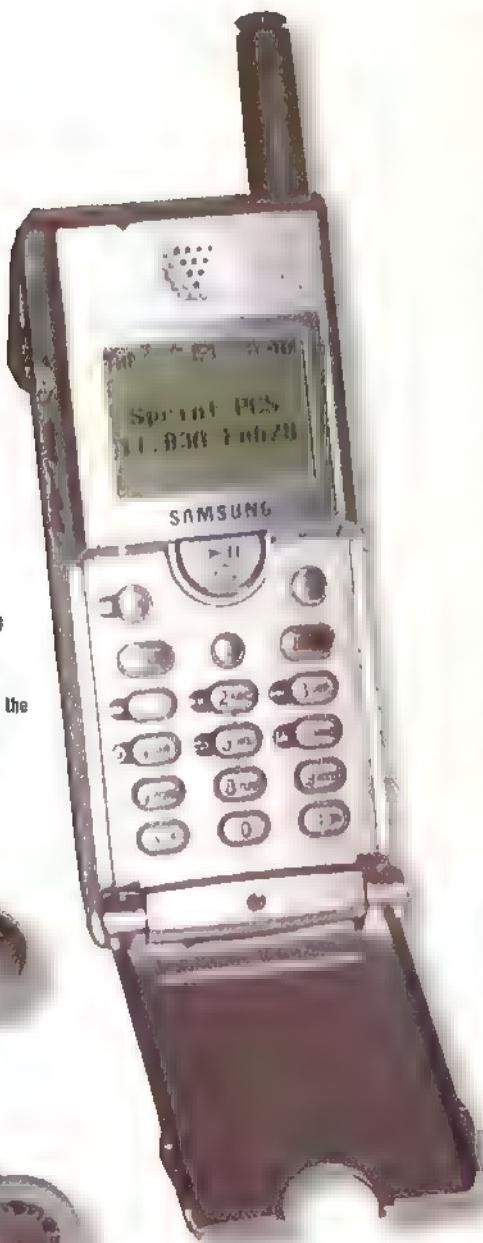
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Music on Hold

Warning: absolutely nothing to do with gaming by William O'Neal



Samsung's \$500
MP3 player/cell
phone combo is the
coolest gadget
we've seen in a
long time.

Tough it's not exactly "new," we've just received ours, so the Uproar is, in fact, new to us. You all may not know this, but plenty of companies consider you to be an incredibly desirable group of consumers to reach. This means that we here at CGW are privy to more nongaming meetings, with vendors of all manner of products, than we care to relive right now—anybody need a UPS (uninterruptible power supply) in their home?

That being said, when I met with Samsung at this year's Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas and received the rundown of its latest cell phone offerings, I was taken aback by the Uproar. I had been hearing about the gadget of all gadgets for ages, but playing with one was an entirely different thing.

Sporting all the features that you'd expect in a top-of-the-line cell phone—voice-activated dialing, more than three hours of talk time, voice mail, wireless Internet, yada, yada yada—the Uproar also boasts 64MB of internal flash memory, enabling it to play up to one hour of CD-quality music.

It works like this: You download MP3s to the Uproar via your computer's USB interface, plug in the headphones/microphone/remote control, and hit the streets. If someone calls you while you're getting down with Jay-Z, you'll hear a little beep. Hit the phone button on the remote, the music stops, and you're talking. At \$500, the Uproar isn't the cheapest cell phone out there. And with a scant 64MB RAM, it's not the best MP3 player either. But wouldn't you rather have one of these than both of those? **CGW**

\$500 | Samsung | www.samsungtelecom.com

REVIEW

Acoustic Edge 5.1 PCI Sound Card

Move Over, SoundBlaster

The Acoustic Edge is a premier 3D sound card if ever there was one. Not only was installation a snap, but, like most 3D cards in its class, the Acoustic Edge also supports every current 3D sound API: from DirectSound3D, EAX, and A3D to I3DS2, all driven by its robust ThunderBird DSP (digital signal processor) accelerator.

Using DSP algorithms, the Acoustic Edge offers 3D gaming sound output to a 5.1- or 6-channel speaker system. While it lacks an AC-3 optical connection, there are plenty of inputs, including Digital S/PDIF. If a game lacks 3D sound support or uses DirectSound only, Philips' QMSS (QSound Multi Speaker System) and QSEM (QSound Environmental Modeling) step in to translate the necessary 4- or 5 1-channel output. The Acoustic Edge does a decent job of adding extra depth and imaging to EAX games too. For example,

the imaging and positional sounds in UNREAL TOURNAMENT and STAR WARS EPISODE 1: POD RACER were some of the best I've heard from any sound card, including Creative Labs' xGamer. However, not all EAX games worked as well.

With an excellent mix of bundled software—including STAR WARS EPISODE 1: POD RACER and ROGUE SPEAR, just to name a couple—the Acoustic Edge offers as much as Creative's SoundBlaster Live! Platinum for almost half the price. Simply put, this sound card is hard to beat.

—Raphael Liberatore



see | Philips | www.philipsusa.com

Maxtor 80GB Firewire hard drive

Gigs to Spare

It's not the fastest hard drive I've ever tested, nor is it as cheap as a standard internal hard drive. Nevertheless, as I tested the Maxtor external Firewire hard drive, a near-religious zealotry overcame my usually cautious nature.

Of all the drives I've installed—IDE, SCSI, USB, MFM—none have installed this easily, even considering that I had to pop open the case to install the IEEE 1394 card; that was easy too.

The brainchild of Apple Computers, IEEE 1394 (aka Firewire) is gradually becoming widespread, and Firewire and interface cards—like the Maxtor PCI card—are now readily available. Installation of a Firewire card is extremely easy with Windows 98SE, Windows ME, or Windows 2000, as there is native support in the operating system—no driver installation is needed. And overall performance is on a par with a 5,400-rpm internal IDE drive.

After inserting the Firewire card and rebooting, you simply attach the cable to the Firewire ports on the PC and the hard drive, and power it up. Maxtor preformats the drive using FAT32. Now you have a huge, 80GB backup or second drive. And it's easy to move to any Firewire-equipped system. The drive garnered a Business Disk Winmark score of 3,320, which is just about average.

The combination of decent performance, ease of use, and ease of transport make the Maxtor Firewire drive a winner in my book. Check it out. —Loyd Case

\$375 street; \$45 for the IEEE 1394 PCI adapter card | Maxtor | www.maxtor.com

>>> Industry Bytes

Got a Buck, Buy a MHz If analysts' predictions are right, consumers can expect to pay about one dollar per megahertz by the third quarter of this year. Hallelujah, falling prices.

Coming Up From nVidia nVidia's next-generation graphics chip, GeForce3, should be shipping by the time you read this. Id programmer John Carmack has been raving about the chip in his plan file: "I haven't

had such an impression of raising the performance bar since the Voodoo2. There are a ton of new features for programmers to play with." Yeah, well, at \$800 for a GeForce3 card, only Carmack can afford them.

Wil Power



William O'Neal

Don't worry too much about Xbox—it'll be obsolete in months

Everyone and their brother—including us—are all hot about Xbox. Still, the fact remains that PCs are gonna kick its ass. It's almost like predicting that George W. Bush will say something stupid during the next four years, but it's a no-brainer that PCs will render Xbox obsolete in less than a year of its release.

As we mentioned in our March issue, "By now it's no secret what's lurking on the inside of the system: a 733MHz CPU, a 250MHz custom-designed graphics chip from nVidia, 64MB RAM, a DVD drive, and the oft-questioned 8GB hard drive." If you project Moore's Law (which has been consistently accurate) three years from now, you can expect computers to boast 4GHz CPUs with at least a gig of RAM and 300GB hard drives. If consoles are purported to have a life cycle of some five years, that means that Xbox

Dell's Losses May Be Your Gain Dell recently cut 1,700 jobs, the company's first big layoff in 17 years. The company will offer machines at reduced prices to try to stimulate sales. Looking for a cheap machine?

spotlight review

3D To Go

New GeForce2-powered laptop

kick 3D performance into

high gear by Loyd Case

For years, gamers have been struggling to run 3D games on portable PCs. Sure, ATI's Rage Mobility made it possible to run these games on them, but gamers don't want "possible," we want eye-popping performance guaranteed. Now, thankfully, we have a savior in Toshiba's new Satellite series—the most notable of which is the 2805-S402, a not-so-little laptop that incorporates nVidia's spankin'-new GeForce2Go graphics chip replete with 16MB of video memory.

In many ways, this is an action gamer's dream come true. In the past, 3D games performed anemically, at best, on notebook PCs. But the GeForce2Go changes all that.

Essentially a low-power version of the GeForce2MX GPU (graphics processing unit), the GeForce2Go runs at a somewhat slower clock rate than its desktop cousin—the last thing you'd want is a laptop GPU with a penchant for overheating. The bright, 15" LCD screen has a native resolution of 1024x768 and can resolve 18 bits of color (256,000 colors); most laptop displays aren't capable of resolving 32-bit color. At lower resolutions, the image quality is still pretty decent, due to the GeForce2Go's good-quality filtering.

In addition to improved graphics, the Satellite sports a list of top-of-the-line portable PC bullet points: an 850MHz Pentium III, 128MB RAM, and a nifty combo DVD-CD/RW drive. This little beast may have what it takes to finally put that desktop on mothballs. Maybe.

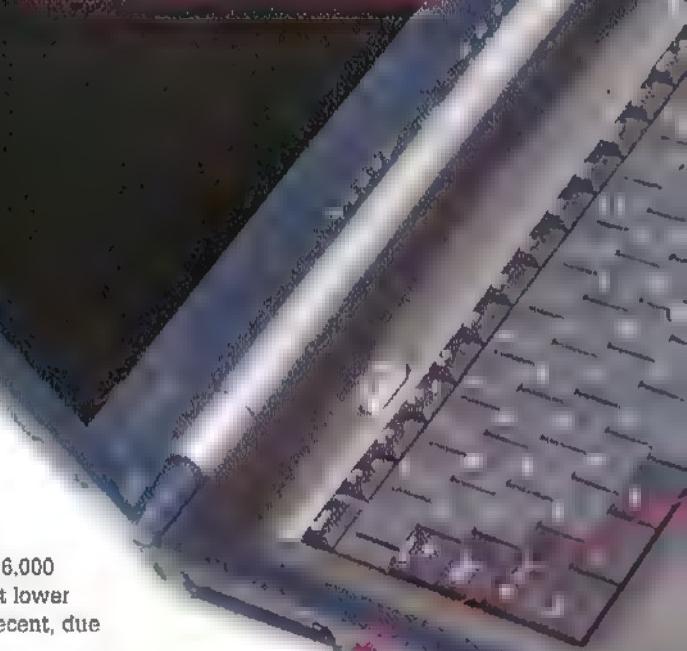
The Satellite 2805 is at the top of Toshiba's mainstream—read, consumer—laptop series. At a buck less than \$2,750, it costs less than Toshiba's premium Tecra line. About the only thing it gives up is the built-in wireless networking that Toshiba's enterprise portables boast, but it does come with 100MB ethernet. There's also a 56 Kbps modem (software driven, unfortunately) and a built-in floppy drive. Like many notebooks, the Satellite uses a trackpoint device, resembling a tiny joystick embedded in the center of the keyboard. We admit that this is a terrible solution for gamers, but so is the trackpad found on many other laptops. Our solution: Get a compact mouse, such as Logitech's notebook wheel mouse, for serious gaming. At least the keyboard feels good, with nearly full-size keys. The cursor keys, too, are full size, and laid out in an inverted T similar to that found on desktop keyboards.

The Satellite's Yamaha sound chip delivers decent sound quality. Although Toshiba's specs talk



Toshiba Satellite 2805-S402

Toshiba America Information Systems
www.toshiba.com



Where's My 3D Audio?

Now that portable PCs have finally received a legitimate 3D graphics makeover, it's time for 3D sound—3D graphics' technological stepsister—to make its entry into the portable picture. While we don't expect 5.1-capable sound cards to appear on laptops anytime soon, we did meet with a vendor at this year's Intel Developers Forum that might be onto something.

Massachusetts-based Analog Devices has recently announced that it'll be shipping a product called SoundMAX that features its SPX (sound production extensions) technology. Essentially, this product will feature a series of audio codecs that allow motherboard manufacturers to convert traditional 2-channel audio signals into anything from 4- to 6-channel audio, in software.

While it won't boast the kind of performance that you'd expect from, say, a Creative SoundBlaster Live!, SoundMAX may be the only 3D-positional audio in town for portable gamers. Currently the technology is shipping on some Sony and Compaq laptops, and the company hopes to leverage its appeal to the gaming community by forging partnerships with Toshiba and Dell as well. —William O'Neal



Laptop vs. Desktop	
Toshiba Satellite 2805-S402	Dell Dimension 4100*
3D GameGauge Score [†]	35.4
CPU	850MHz Pentium III
RAM	128MB
Graphics	16MB GeForce2Go
Hard Drive	20GB
Price	\$2,749
Dell Dimension 4100*	64.6
	800MHz Pentium III
	128MB
	32MB GeForce2 GTS
	19GB
	\$1,699

*Reviewed in CGW #197. The price and specs on this system have subsequently changed; we have included this info for comparison purposes only. †3D GameGauge tests 3D performance by running the scores of several frame rate tests using actual games.

about 3D audio support, it's strictly a 2-speaker or headphone affair; there's no provision for 4-speaker gaming rigs.

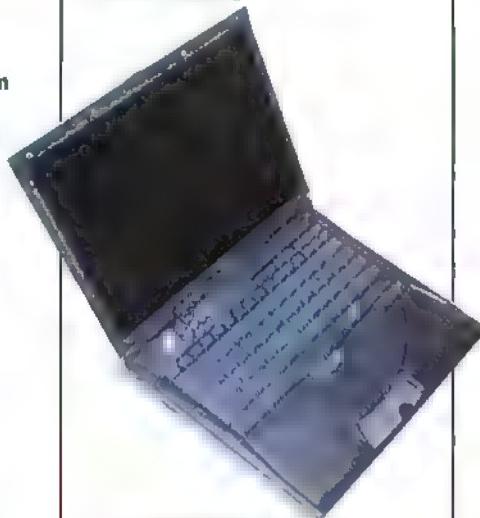
The Satellite 2805-S402 posted a credible 35.4 on Computer Gaming World's

3D GameGauge test—not quite in desktop PC territory, but substantially better than past notebook PCs. Note that GameGauge tests are all run at 1024x768. If you're willing to drop the resolution down to 800x600, the performance gets noticeably better. The Content Creation Winstone score was fairly low at 24.4, but most of that was due to the slower hard drive typically found on notebook PCs. Batterymark 4.0 weighed in at a decent, if unremarkable, 2 hours and 8 minutes. At 7.5 pounds, the heft will be noticeable, but you can't get this kind of power in an ultra-light package.

All in all, the new Satellite is a solid performer that offers good all-around value. Toshiba's the first out of the gate—just ahead of Dell—with a viable portable gaming system. **CGW**

Dell's Hot Laptop

GeForce2-powered Inspiron offers an additional 16MB of video memory



Toshiba isn't the only portable gaming option in town. We just got our hands on Dell's Inspiron 8000 portable PC that, like the Toshiba, sports nVidia's GeForce2Go chipset. The Inspiron 8000 ups the GeForce2Go ante by adding an additional 16MB of video memory—bringing the total up to 32MB.

In other respects the Dell is nearly the same as Toshiba's Satellite, with an 850MHz processor, 128MB RAM, and a combo DVD/CD-R drive. Dell offers the Inspiron in 14-inch and 15-inch screen sizes, and throws in sweet sounds from Harman Kardon Odyssey II speakers.

Unfortunately, we didn't have time to fully benchmark the rig before the deadline gods rained down fire and brimstone on us. Loyd Case is holed up in his dungeon beating the hell out of this laptop. Come back next month to see how it fared. —William O'Neal

\$3,071 | Dell | www.dell.com

Altec Lansing's Got You Covered

Altec Lansing's ATP5 Five-Piece and ADA890 Dolby Digital THX-certified speaker systems by William O'Neal

Killer Rigs

The best recipe for building your ultimate gaming machine

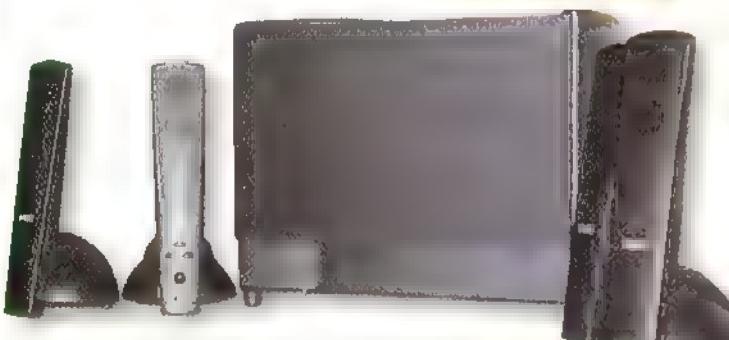
Component	Manufacturer/Model	Price
Case	Antec SX-030	\$213
Motherboard	ASUS A7V	\$140
CPU	AMD Athlon 1.2GHz	\$530
Memory	384MB of PC133 SDRAM	\$300
Graphics	Hercules Prophet .1 Ultra 64MB	\$600
Disk Controller	Adaptec 29160 Ultra 160 SCSI	\$190
3.5" Floppy Drive	Teac	\$20
Hard Drive	36GB Quantum Atlas 10k-I (Ultra SCSI)	\$850
Backup	Creative DVD-RAM Drive	\$270
CD-ROM/DVD	Pioneer 6X SCSI DVD-304S	\$170
Monitor	KDS AV-21TF 21"	\$700
Audio	Acoustic Edge 5.1 PCI Sound Card	\$99
Speakers	Altec Lansing ADA890 Dolby Digital THX-Cert. System	\$350
Networking	3COM Etherlink 10/100 PCI	\$40
Networking Hub	Netgear DS108	\$95
Keyboard	Microsoft Natural Keyboard Pro	\$59
Mouse	Microsoft IntelliMouse Explorer	\$60
USB Hub	Logitech WingMan 7-port USB Hub	\$70
Flight Joystick	CH F16 Combatstick USB	\$65
Rudder Pedals	CH Pro Pedals USB	\$100
Gamepad	Thrustmaster FireStorm Dual Power	\$40
Total		\$4861

When it comes to multimedia speaker systems, Pennsylvania-based Altec Lansing ain't playing around. Covering more SKUs than Scott Baio does Hollywood starlets, if there's one thing Altec Lansing seems hell-bent on pulling off, it's providing a little something for everyone. The follow-up to its three-piece system, the ATP5 Altec Lansing's ATP5 picks up where its predecessor left off by adding four channels and three surround-sound modes in a tight little package. And the ADA890 Dolby Digital system comes replete with a coveted THX certification.

Coming in at \$200, the ATP5 is a solid and affordable surround-sound option. Boasting a combined 80 watts (35 from the satellites and 45 from the subwoofer), these speakers have what it takes to alienate you from anyone who has the misfortune of sitting near you—neighbors, wives, coworkers, whoever.

When compared with similarly priced 4-channel systems like Logitech's Soundman Xtrusio DSR-100 (\$175), Boston Acoustics' BA-7500 (\$200), and Cambridge Soundworks' FPS2000 Digital (\$150), the ATP5s can hold their own. Whilst bumping a little Stankonia, the wooden subwoofer had the bass on crunk, and the four satellites spit out a crisp and clean signal. We also "tested" the speakers against a series of DVDs (*Saving Private Ryan*, *The Cell*, and *Gladiator*), as

continued on page 108



Altec Lansing ATP5 Five-Piece speaker system
\$200 Manufacturer: Altec Lansing www.alteclansing.com



>>> Industry Bytes

P4s by the Buttload To meet rising demand for its top-of-the-line chips, Intel will allow Taiwan-based Acer Labs Inc. to manufacture Pentium 4 chipsets. Thankfully, unlike the chipsets manufactured by Intel, those created by ALI will give PC manufacturers the option of using

RDRAM or DDR DRAM.

Budget Radeon ATI Technology has released a low-end version of its respected Radeon chip. While not positioned as a gaming peripheral, the Radeon VE's inexpensive dual monitor support may appeal to some gamers. But

the baby Radeon, which ships with 32MB of DDR memory, will cost the same (\$100) as nVidia's similarly priced GeForce2 MX, which boasts a better bit rate.

Get Lara on the Phone Nokia signed a deal with Eidos to develop gaming content for WAP.

enabled mobile phones. Wireless Application Protocol is that new standard that lets you view content that you'd never be able to see on your obsolete, one-year-old phone. Drop \$200 on a new phone, and soon you'll be able to oggle Lara Croft's pixelated ass all over again. This is progress? ▶

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Altec Lansing ADA890 Dolby Digital THX-certified speaker system
\$350 Manufacturer: Altec Lansing www.nitelansing.com



Photo: FROM PAGE

well as a couple of games (QUAKE III: ARENA and HALF-LIFE: COUNTER-STRIKE).

In all of our tests, the ATP5s performed as expected—well, until we cranked them up to nearly dangerous levels. Only then did the signal begin to break up. But then, most speakers in the \$200 range tend to do that when you seriously tax 'em. That being said, the ATP5s are good speakers and sport all of the options that you'd need and expect: two analog inputs and an S/PDIF input for PCM digital audio playback. The thing is, though, you can get identical, if not better, sound quality out of the Cambridge Soundworks FPS2000 Digital and the Logitech Soundman Xtrusio DSR-100 speaker systems, both of which are cheaper.

The Altec Lansing ADA890 Dolby Digital system, on the other hand, is nearly flawless. I mean, what is there not to like about multimedia computer speakers that ship with a remote control? Not much.

In the wattage department, the ADA890s are bringing some serious power. Not enough to cause their own rolling blackout, I'll have you know, but enough to make the opening battle scenes in *Gladiator* and *Saving Private Ryan* even more disturbing. The subwoofer is pushing 60 watts, while the four satellites come in at 15 watts each. During *Saving Private Ryan's* heartbreakingly final scene, I felt the rumbling of each Panzer as it made its way toward our would-be heroes.

The ADA890s boast four unique play modes: Dolby Digital, Dolby ProLogic, Stereo, and Quad. The Quad mode—a special 4-channel configuration for gaming with 3D-positional-enabled sound cards—was designed with gaming in mind, but I preferred to play QUAKE III ARENA and HALF-LIFE: COUNTER-STRIKE in Dolby Digital. Also, music tended to sound better in Dolby ProLogic than in Stereo. While these may sound like slights, rest assured they're anything but. These speakers are by no means getting back to Altec Lansing.

In addition to their excellent sound, the ADA890s are extremely versatile. If space is at a premium, you can mount the two rear satellites to the front ones, essentially creating a three piece setup that still boasts full-on, 6 channel, THX-certified sound. If, however, you've got room to spare, you can detach the rear satellites (or surround modules) and place them at your side for a more accurate surround-sound experience.

With a price tag of \$350, the ADA890s are by no means cheap. But then, they're only \$150 more than the ATP5s, and the sound quality is far superior. **CGW**

WIL POWER (CONTINUED)

gamers will be stuck for a few years with a 733MHz CPU and 64MB RAM, while PC guys are kickin' it with hardware five times as fast.

Some people in the industry seem to think that the impending launch of Xbox spells doom for PC gaming. When all is said and done, hardcore gamers want the best that's available, and they want to play games that take advantage of the best technology available. In two years the best technology available ain't gonna be in no Xbox.

TECH MEDICS

Our Bad

I just thought that I would point out a mistake in your article. You said that all three of the next-gen consoles would support Dolby 5.1 sound. This is not true. The Nintendo Gamecube will not support Dolby 5.1, because Nintendo felt that the problem with latency was too high to practically play a game with it.

Nintendo's Gamecube will boast Dolby Surround, not Dolby 5.1.

20 Whole Seconds! What to Do With All That Time?

Hi, thanks for the tips on how to reduce my boot time. I reduced my boot time from the already fast time of 1 minute 23 seconds to 1 minute 3 seconds! 20 seconds I timed it from the time I turned it on to the time the tray programs finished loading. Thanks again!

Hey! No problem, man. How

CONTINUED ON PAGE

Micro Micro Machine Researchers at the Sandia National Laboratory have created one tiny ass robot—a vehicle with two treads that weighs less than 1 ounce and is only 1/4-inch tall. The device, controlled by an 8K ROM processor, can be equipped with a camera, microphone, and

chemical micro sensor. Scientists may one day use these robots in vital roles, but for now, they're just taking pictures up women's skirts.

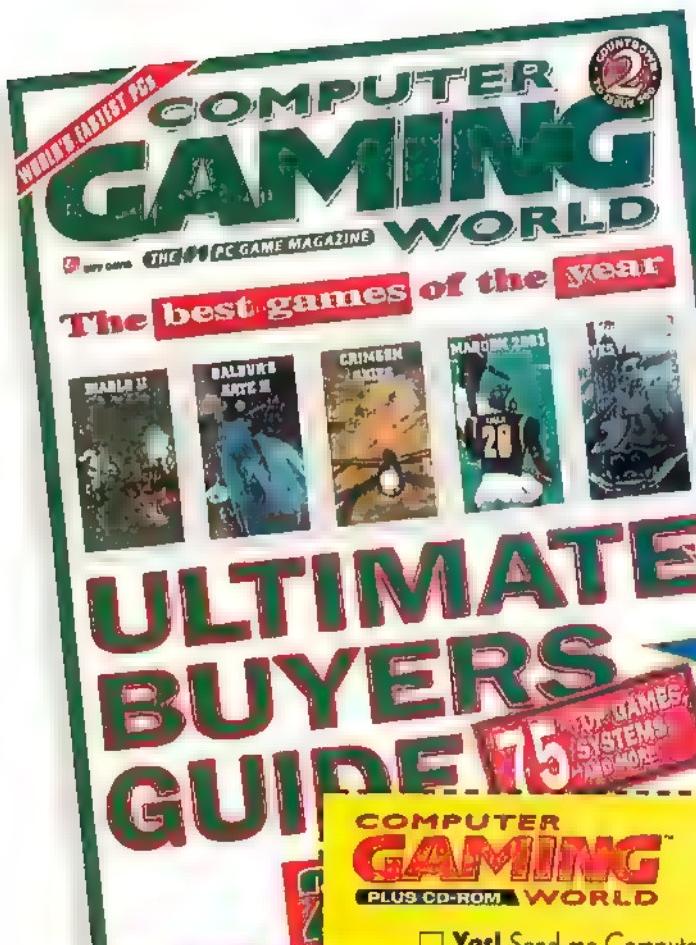
Race to 10GHz A consortium of tech companies, including Intel, AMD, and Micron, has teamed up with

several research labs to manufacture the first 10GHz processor. The group will use a new fabrication process, called extreme ultraviolet lithography, which the company claims "will be the next way of making faster and more powerful processors." EUV LLC expects to market its first hot chips in 2005.

A 2GB CD-R Drive? TDK Thinks So. TDK will soon release a CD-R drive that the company says will write up to 2GB per disc. To do this, the drive writes data to eight different layers of a disc, as opposed to the two layers that current CD-Rs write on. **CGW**

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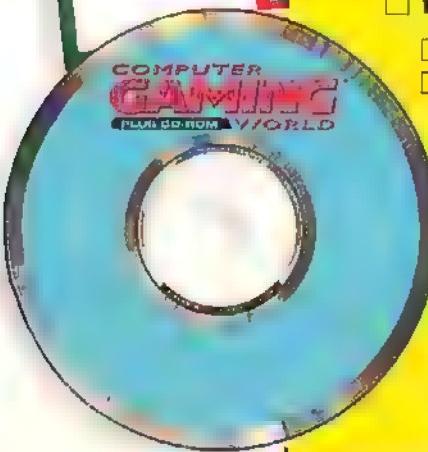
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Intel AnyPoint Home Network

A Network in a Box

Setting up a home network can be a real drag. In the past, it's meant installing network interface cards, strunging ethernet cable, and setting up arcane protocols—not for the weak at heart. However, companies have been trying to make networking less painful with USB and telephone jack networking schemes. Intel's AnyPoint Wireless Home Network USB system is a good example of how much progress has been made.

AnyPoint is easy to install, thanks mostly to the fact that you don't need to crack open your computer—plug-and-play is a cinch. Essentially, the AnyPoint modem uses an existing phone line to network your computers without using a hub or router. Computers connect to one another via the phone jack or splitter, allowing PCs to transfer data and share Internet access. AnyPoint also provides a quick and painless solution for sharing printers and scanners. Since the phone lines run under different frequencies than the network, there's no need to worry about tying up the phone line. You can still use the network for transferring files or printing while chatting on the phone.

Like the hardware, the AnyPoint network software also is easy to set up and use. Intel bundles Music Match Jukebox, Intel Intercom, an Internet security firewall (BlackICE), a parental control module, and the remote-control racing game RE*VOLT, so you have a lot of apps at your disposal.

The AnyPoint modem has decent Internet and file-sharing performance. However, LAN and Internet-gaming performance fell short. The four PCs that we tried out experienced frequent hiccups, choppiness, and disconnects.

AnyPoint is a viable solution for those searching for an easy way to set up a home network. But for serious gaming, nothing beats that confounded ethernet system and a fast online connection. —Raphael Liberatore

See | Intel | www.intel.com



continued from page 100

do you intend to spend the seconds that you save every time you fire up your machine?

Which 3D Card Should I Buy?

I have a 400MHz PC with 64MB RAM, a 5GB hard drive, and a 3dfx Voodoo3. I really want to upgrade, seeing that 64MB RAM is the minimum now, a 5GB drive isn't quite cutting it, and 400MHz is pretty slow. I could probably get my dad to help me out with cash (I'm 13), but I still am pretty poor, like 400 bucks. I also see these video cards that are over \$100—that's one fourth of my cash! I need some decent hardware at a fairly low price. I have any ideas?

Buy 64MB RAM and a Hercules 3D Prophet II MX. You can get that graphics card for around \$150. That should suit you for a while.

Which 3D Card Should I Buy, Part 2

I need some help upgrading my "dated" computer. I have an HP Pavilion 8565C P-III 500 with 128MB SDRAM, a 20GB Ultra DMA, an integrated nVidia Riva TNT 3D, six bays, and six slots for expandability. How can I upgrade this machine? In my mind, the two places that need it most are the processor and the video card, but then again, when I bought the computer last year, I thought that it'd last at least a year before needing help. NASCAR Racing 4 proved me wrong with only two weeks to go. Thanks for any help you can provide me!

Buy a new graphics card. If you're short on cash, get a Hercules 3D Prophet II MX. It's got 32MB RAM and sports a GeForce2MX chipset.

Which 3D Card Should I Buy, Part 3

I'm looking for a new video card and want to keep it under \$150. Any suggestions? I have a Voodoo3 3000 AGP, but I'm having trouble running some games like Elite Force and Project IGI. I have an AMD 450 K6-2, 196MB RAM, and a 56X CD-ROM. I upgraded it once already, in 1999, from a Pentium 200, and I think I got taken to the cleaners.

Are you the same guy from the previous question? Anyway, did you get taken? That all depends on how much money they got from you. I'll tell you the same thing that I told the previous guy: Get a Hercules 3D Prophet II MX.

Got SCSI?

I have wanted to buy a CD burner for a long time and have done some research. I noticed that an EIDE burner is a lot cheaper than a SCSI one; I assume that means SCSI is better.

A SCSI drive will be faster. The thing is, though, today's EIDE drives are pretty damn fast. So fast, in fact, that the price delta between a SCSI drive and an EIDE drive, in my opinion, doesn't warrant the extra cost. Get an EIDE drive and start burning. If it sucks, send me a nasty email, and I'll read it every night before I go to sleep. It'll be my own personal hair shirt.

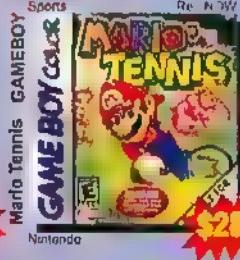
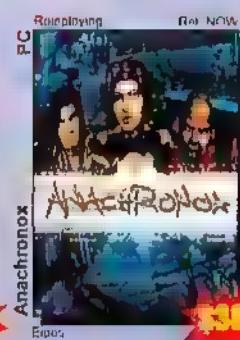
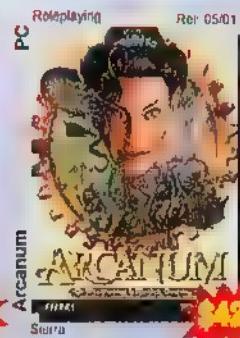
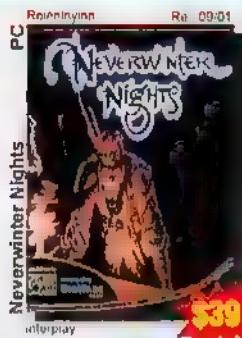
Wil O'Neal has a really big mouth and is known for shooting it off first and asking questions later. Feel like reading him the riot act? Fire away at [william_o'neal@ziffdavis.com](mailto:wilhelm_o'neal@ziffdavis.com) and he'll be sure to send it straight to the trash folder.

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Game Commander

Voice Control for Games & Simulations

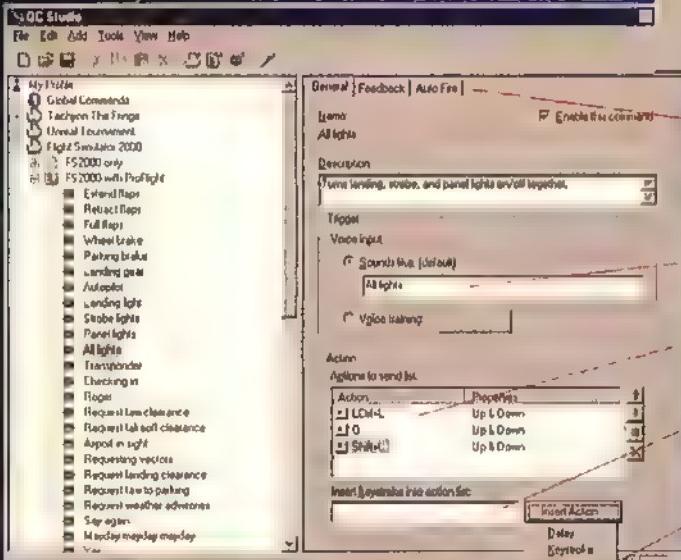
Experience The Next Generation of Award-Winning Voice Control!

No more fumbling with hard to remember keystrokes. The original Game Commander, released in 1998, won numerous awards for bringing the power of voice control to games including "Editor's Choice" from PC Gamer, Computer Gaming World and CNET Gamecenter. Now, Game Commander 2 breaks new ground with lightning fast command response and even more control over your games. You can even run Game Commander 2 along with popular voice chat programs such as TeamSound™, Roger Wilco™, and BattleCom™. And it works as hard as it plays. Take command of Windows 95, 98, Me and 2000 applications too.

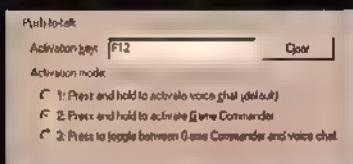


Powerful command editing

The Game Commander Studio gives you full access to all your commands and supports cut, copy and paste operations to make editing a snap.

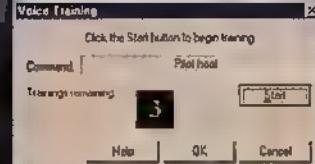


Works with many voice chat programs
Use push-to-talk to switch between Game Commander and popular voice chat programs (Windows 9x & Me only). Or use push-to-talk alone to enable command recognition.



Available voice training

For special cases, strong accents or non-English commands, voice training takes only three utterances:



Voice commands with no training

Put the power of speaker independent voice control to work immediately without tedious voice training.



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Assign your own sounds and recorded speech to hear your commands being acknowledged and enhance the gaming experience.



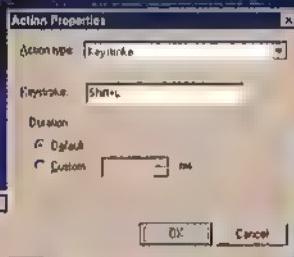
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Adjustable actions

Fine tune any keystroke or action for maximum control.

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Say a command and have it repeated continuously until you tell it to stop. Issue more commands while auto fire runs, including more auto fire commands!

No voice training required

Just type in what you want to say and you're ready.

Massive macro capabilities

Unleash up to 256 keystrokes per voice command.

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EVERQUEST

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EVERQUEST

IF YOU'RE ABOUT TO TAKE THE PLUNGE, GET YOUR BEARINGS HERE

Smoke 'em if you got 'em, soldiers. No, scratch that. The Wizard General has said they're bad for your health—lowers your hit points or something like that. So you're here because you want to be a hero in the world of Norrath? Get in line. You may think it's easy slapping on a scabbard and helmet and going out to slay rats and snakes, but it ain't. You're green and you don't even know the business end of a rusty longsword yet. That's okay, though. We'll get you shipshape in no time. Before you know it, you'll be killing giant wasps, and then orcs, and then someday, if you work hard and keep your wits about you, maybe even a ghoul or two. Just follow these instructions, and you'll zoom from level 1 to 10 in no time.



BY MARK ASHER

PICKING A CHARACTER

EVERQUEST is a game that requires an enormous amount of time to play if you intend to advance your character to the higher levels. As such, it's doubly, nay, triply important that you choose your character wisely. There really are just two types of characters: casters and tanks. The casters primarily attack or help out in battle by casting offensive, defensive, and healing spells. The tanks are the melee characters that fight and soak up damage for the group.

There are some class types that do a little of both, such as druids, shamans, paladins, shadow knights, and others, but as you reach the high levels, you'll find that you're really either a caster or a tank. The hybrid classes that are better casters, like the druids, end up being quite ineffective in melee, whereas the hybrid classes that are better fighters—like rangers—are poor spell casters in the heat of battle.

So, keep that in mind when you select a character. If you're in for the long haul with EVERQUEST, eventually your character will be either a caster or a tank in battle. Choose a character that will give you the playstyle you enjoy.

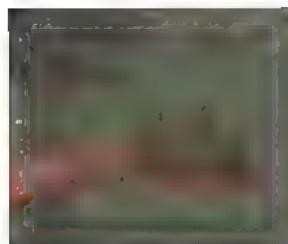
Soloing vs. Grouping

EVERQUEST has been bashed for being a game that's impossible to play without grouping with other players. First, grouping is fun, so it's worthwhile to look for groups. It's safer, and you'll level up faster if you play in groups. Second, you can solo in EVERQUEST, but admittedly it does get harder and harder as you reach higher and higher levels.

You should also carefully select your character type if you expect to solo quite a bit. There are some that really aren't suited very well for soloing, namely the wizard, fighter, and monk. You're eventually going to be frustrated for a variety of reasons if you pick those classes and play alone most of the time. These really are group characters.

There are some classes that are quite good at soloing, however. Both the magician and necromancer classes get pet spells which allow them to summon an elemental or skeleton, respectively. In effect, they create their own small group. The pet is the fighter, staying back to cast spells and then knocking the monster on the noggin with their staves.

The druid and shaman classes are also quite handy for



Kelethin is the city of the wood elves. The first step's a big one. Be careful.



Orc Hill is great for levels 5 through 10. You'll get experience, the Crushbone belts, and shoulderpads.



soloing. They eventually get a nice combination of spells that allow them to run faster (Spirit of Wolf), cause their opponents to run slower (Snare), and damage their opponent over time. They also have instant damage spells and nice shield spells, and can melee fairly well at the lower levels. The other classes can solo to some extent, but these four are the champs.

GETTING STARTED

No matter what character type and class you choose to play, there are a few things you should do before you take your first step.

First, think about remapping your keyboard. I like to remap the movement keys to the familiar WASD first-person-shooter movement keys. You may be happy using the arrow keys for movement, but the one key you should definitely remap is the attack key. The default is for the "A" key to start an attack. If you have clicked on an NPC vendor to buy or sell something and accidentally hit the "A" key, you'll attack the vendor. You'll also be dead in about one second as the NPCs attack back with a

fury. Change the attack key to something else that you won't easily hit.

The other thing you'll want to do is check your inventory and outfit your character. You'll have a weapon in there. You'll also have a scroll that contains your first quest, which involves finding your guild master and delivering the scroll to him or her. You want to do this; you'll earn a nice little experience point boost as well as an item. You can also use some training points to start your important skills. Put one point in each of your class-specific skills, such as one-hand slash or bash for fighter types, for example, and skill points into the various magic schools, such as evocation. Now, here are some tips for getting a quick start with some selected race/class combinations.

HALFLING DRUID

You'll love playing as a halfling druid. Not only are you as cute and lovable as a Disney character, you'll eventually get one of the game's most coveted spells, Spirit of Wolf. (If you play a druid and then start a new charac-

ter that doesn't get this spell, you'll be amazed how anyone can play without it.) You'll be everyone's friend, and you'll be able to solo pretty well for a long time. You can also forage for food, so you'll rarely be hungry.

Playing a halfling druid is also nice because your newbie zone, Misty Thicket, is one of the best in the game. It's well-balanced, protected by guards you can run to when you get in trouble, and even has a vendor or two in the little houses where you can sell your booty if you don't feel like zoning into Rivervale.

To start, you'll want to explore the area of Misty Thicket right outside the entrance to Rivervale. There you'll fight bats, rats, fire beetles, snakes, bixies, and goblin whelps until you get no experience for them, which will be at about level 5. Then you'll move past the guards onto the further areas of Misty Thicket, where you'll fight giant wasps, tree snakes, large and giant bats, as well as a couple of goblin camps and one orc camp. The orcs will be too difficult, but the goblins should be within your reach as you get near level 10.

In general, there are two creatures to watch

but for. In the newbie area, the queen fire beetle is deadly. In the more advanced area, a goblin wizard named Mooto roams around and can be a problem.

A good fighting strategy is to cast Snare on the creature so you can outrun it if things go bad, and then alternately use your "burst of" spell, Flamelick, and your melee attack to battle.

Good quests for young druids include the Big Collector quest that you'll get from Blixin Entopop. Talk to him, and he will tell you about his bug collection. If you ask him about it, he'll give you the list of things that go in the bug collection: fire beetle eye, spiderling eye, spiderling leg, giant fire beetle leg, giant wasp wing, and giant scarab egg sac. Put all six in the Bug Collection Box, press "Combine" to complete Bug Collection, and then give it to Blixin for a reward and experience points.

Another good quest is the Deputy Tagil. Go to Uner Ghartrunk at the druid farm and talk to him. He'll give you a note to take to Deputy Tagil at the Misty Thicket/Rivervale entrance. Give the note to Tagil, who pays you, and then return the payment to Uner. You'll get experience points, money, and a minor item.

Finally, when you fight goblins you'll often get Runnyeye warbeads. Save these to give to Sheriff Roglio in town and you'll get some experience points. Eventually, after you give him hundreds (literally), you can visit Marsha-



The skeleton band in an inn in Painnot. This is a city for evil characters, but you might be able to sneak in.

Ghobber and ask him if you're part of the "Wall." If you are, he'll give you a nice magic ring.

Another good druid race is the wood elf. Also, the shaman class is very similar to the druid class. Good shaman classes include the barbarians, trolls, and ogres.

WOOD ELF RANGER

If you want to be a master of the forest, these guys are top shelf. The ranger class is primarily a melee class, but you do get some spells, so it's a bit more interesting than just wading in with a sword. What's nice about the wood elf is that you get the Hide and Track abilities right away. Use Track to find creatures right then instead of running around blindly like the other classes, and use Hide when you have to rest. All but Undead creatures will not see you when you're hidden.

The wood elf starts in Keelthin, the tree city. Don't fall off the bridges! You'll do your fighting in Greater Faydark up until level 10 or so. You'll fight wasps, bats, decaying skeletons, and orc pawns early on. Always know where the lifts are that will get you up in the trees, because that's where the guards are.

Once you get to about level 6, go to Orc Hill near the orc lift. Ask other players—everyone knows where it is. Here you'll fight orc oracles and centurions. Not only are these great experience-point getters, they will often give you nice treasure like leather armor parts. Also, orcs and centurions sometimes drop Crushbone belts; save these! Take these to Canice Nusback in the warriors guild in the dwarven city of Kaladim. This is one of the best young character quests in the game. Not only do you get a nice experience point boost for every few belts (or shoulderpads) you give Canice, he gives you some money and a piece of armor. You can wear the armor or sell it. This quest is so helpful and will boost you up in levels so fast, that every young player on Faydwer (gnomes, dwarves, and high elves) should do it. Just get yourself bound to the orc lift.

The fighting style of the wood elf ranger is pretty simple. Use one-handed weapons because at level 17 you will get dual wield, so

you might as well get good at one-handed attacks. You don't get any spells until level 9, so until then you're a melee class. Use Tracking to find the creatures you can beat without taking too much damage, and remember to sit when you heal. When you can, group after level 4.

Other good ranger races include humans and half elves.

HIGH ELF MAGICIAN

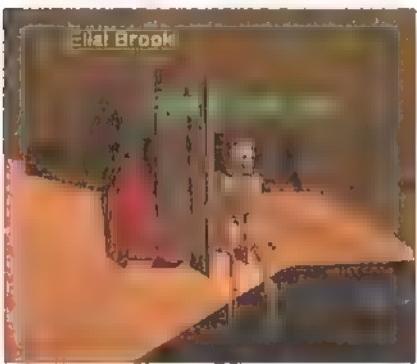
The high elves are the haughty, nose-stuck-up-in-the-air race, but for good reason. Tall and graceful, they live in one of the prettiest cities in the game, Felwithe, and their princess is featured on the EVERQUEST box. That will give you a swelled head. The magician class is a pet class like the necromancer, but you don't get your pet until level 4. Magicians do get food and water summoning spells, so you'll never go hungry. Eventually you'll be able to summon magic weapons too, which is great for fighting monsters that are immune to normal attacks, like ghouls.

The magicians should fight right outside the Felwithe gates at first. Wasps, bats, decaying skeletons, and orc pawns abound. You're a weak fighter, but you can still do some damage with your dagger. For the first three levels, all you can really do is cast a Shielding on yourself, and use Burst of Flame and your dagger to attack enemies. Once you get to level 4 you get new spells, including...your pet spell!

You can summon one of four types of elementals: earth, air, water, and fire. Air is probably the weakest. Fire is also weak, but every time it's hit, it does burn damage. Water and earth elementals are good choices. You also get your Gate spell, which transports you back to your bind spot. This is your escape hatch for when things go wrong: gate away from trouble.

Your fighting strategy with a pet is simple: Let it do most of the work. What you want to do is cast a Burn spell on the monster, and then have your pet attack it. Hot key your pet commands—attack, back off, etc. Keep casting Burn as your pet attacks, and when your pet's health is low, step in and melee so the monster will attack you instead of your pet.

The best young quest is again the



There are some evil NPC necromancers in Toxulla Forest.



Deliver the belts and shoulderpads to Canice Nusback to get experience points, money, and a nice reward.

CHECK CARD NOT ACCEPTED
Outside Cabilis, near the guards, where
you can sell to merchants.



Crushbone belt quest as discussed in the wood elf section.

Other good magician races include gnomes and humans.

IKSAR NECROMANCER

The lizardlike Iksar are a hated race, so you'll have problems in other cities once you venture off the continent of Kunark. The good news is that you don't ever really have to leave Kunark if you don't want to. The Iksar have a natural regeneration ability, so you'll gain hit points back faster as you rest, which is invaluable.

What I like about playing an Iksar necromancer is that you get a spell, Dark Pact, that slowly drains your hit points and puts them into your mana pool. The Iksar's regeneration ability means that you can sit and actually regain hit points while under the influence of this spell, so you get a much faster mana regeneration rate as a result.

The necromancer is really one of most entertaining classes to play. You get a skeleton pet that laughs maniacally, and praises you when you give it a command. You also get more spells than you can really afford: defensive spells, spells to boost your abilities, spells to drain health from your enemies and transfer it to you, direct damage spells, spells that weaken your enemy, and more. You have a wide variety of tactical choices in combat with your spell arsenal.

As an Iksar, you'll start in the city of Cabilis. You'll fight outside East Cabilis initially, battling decaying skeletons and scaled wolf pups.

Then, at about levels 5 and 6, you'll want to start venturing into the Field of Bones. You'll battle a wide range of skeletons—Iksar bandits, brigands and marauders, various beetles, scaled wolves, scaled wolf hunters, and bonecrawlers.

One of the better newbie quests in the game is the Curscale Armor quest. Find Klok Mugrok in the Haggie Baron store in Cabilis next to the Court of Pain. Tell him you'll perform a small service. He'll then give you a pack to fill with eight scaled cur hides you'll snag off dead scaled wolf pups. Fill it, press "Combine," bring it back to Klok, and he'll give you a random piece of curscale armor and good experience. One of the nice things about this quest is that you'll find a lot of dead cubs that you

can loot, because players kill them for experience points and don't bother with the hides.

The other good races for necromancers are the dark elves (a lot of fun too), the gnomes, and the erudites.

ERUDITE WIZARD

There's something appealing about playing a wizard in EVERQUEST. It's not the most popular class, and it gets harder and harder to solo as a wizard as you advance, but you get the most powerful offensive spells in the game at high levels. You can really blast away

The Erudins have the highest natural intelligence of all the races; you can have a higher intelligence rating as an erudite wizard than as another race. Intelligence equals mana, so you can cast more spells before resting to replenish your mana. This is the sole advantage to playing an erudite. If you're willing to get by with a little less mana, try a dark elf wizard.

Your starting city is Erudin. Complete your initial quest, and then venture out into Toxxula Forest. The great drawback to playing an erudite wizard will then become apparent as night falls: You can't see worth a damn. You'll need a source of light, or you'll get lost if you stray too far from the entrance to Erudin where the guards are. Sphere of Light is the spell you want for your light source.

The initial creatures you'll battle are snakes, widow hatchlings, and kobold runts. A good strategy for a young wizard is to stand as far away as you can from your quarry and cast Shock of Frost. Make sure you have your Shielding spell on as well. As the creature charges, hit your attack key so you automatically melee with the creature when it closes, and begin to cast another Shock of Frost. Keep attacking, trying to cast the Shock spell until one of you is dead. At level 4, you'll still be adventuring in the same area, but you get new spells. Root and Shock of Fire are your staples now. Cast Root and it will hold the creature in place while you repeatedly cast Shock on it. The problem with Root is that it's unpredictable. Sometimes it won't work, but will still anger the creature. Sometimes it will only hold the creature for a few seconds. Okiels Radiation is another nice spell at level 4. It puts a minor damage shield on your wizard, and every time a monster hits the wizard,

the monster takes two points of damage.

You also get Fade and Gate at level 4. Fade is a short, random transport. Try to get it off when you're in trouble, and you may get far enough away to cast a Root on your enemy. Gate will transport you back to your bind spot.

At level 6, you continue to get more powerful versions of the shield and shock spells. You'll have graduated to skeletons and larger kobolds. You'll probably want to group as much as possible, too. You can solo, but you'll die a bit more often than some classes when your Root spell doesn't work.

The best quest for your Erudin wizards is the skeleton chips quest. Talk to the priest in the Temple of Quelious in Erudin, and tell her you want to battle the undead. She'll give you a box that you then fill with six bone chips from skeletons or decaying skeletons and return. You'll get experience points and a random item that's often nice. Another easy quest is to kill the poachers and return their heads to the paladin guard outside the gate. CGW



LITTLE PEOPLE, BIG HEAD You'll go inside Kaladim the mighty fortress housing the dwerven race, to deliver the Crushbone belts to complete the quest.

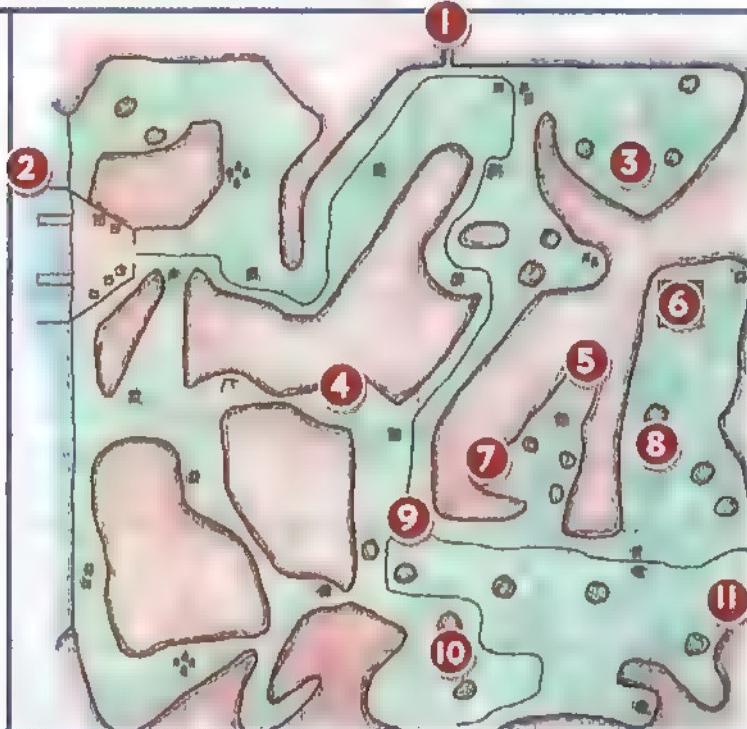


US AND THEM Giant scarabs sometimes yield pristine shells that are a quest component for armor for the "short" races—halflings, dwarves, and gnomes.

NOW YOU CAN FIND YOUR BODY

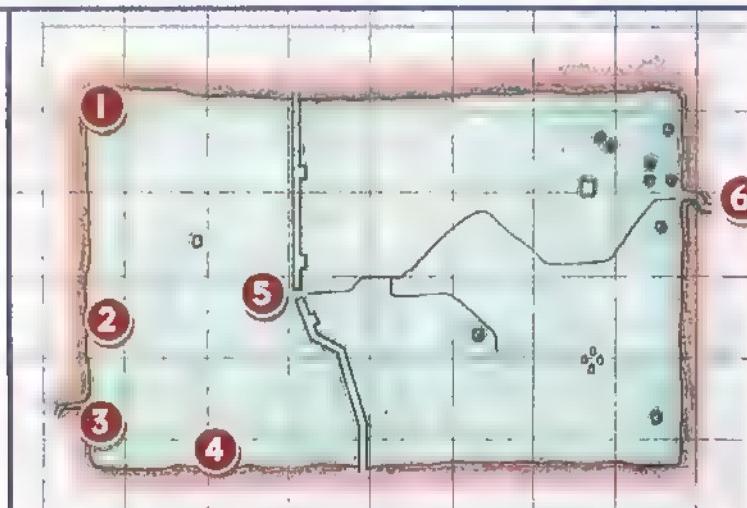
EVERQUEST MAPS

BUTCHERBLOCK MOUNTAINS



- 1 KALADIM
- 2 BOAT TO FREEPORT
- 3 GOBLIN CAMP
- 4 GOBLIN WARRIOR CAMP
- 5 STONE PILLAR PROTECTED BY ORCS
- 6 THE CHESSBOARD
- 7 BANDIT CAMP
- 8 GOBLIN CAMP
- 9 THE CROSSROADS
- 10 GOBLIN CAMP
- 11 GREATER FAYDARK

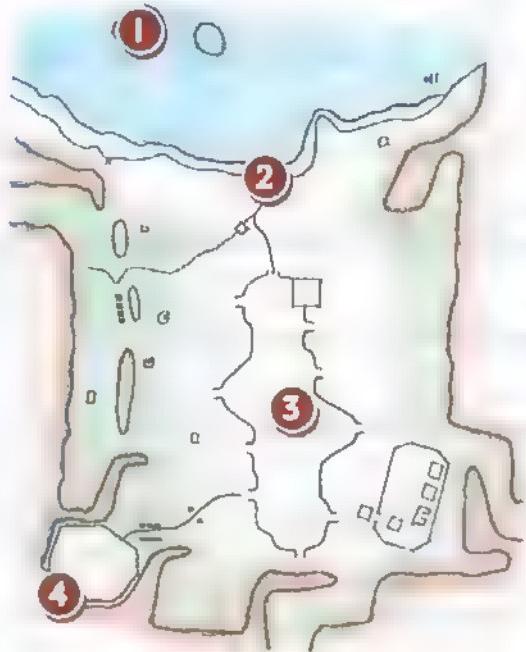
MISTY THICKET



- 1 ORC CAMP
- 2 GOBLIN CAMP
- 3 GOBLIN CAMP
- 4 GOBLIN CAMP
- 5 GATE THROUGH THE WALL
- 6 TO RIVERVALE

SPECIAL THANKS TO "MUSE" OVER AT EQATLAS FOR HELPING US WITH OUR MAPS. TO SEE EVEN MORE DETAILED MAPS OF EVERY REGION IN THE GAME, HIT UP WWW.EQATLAS.COM.

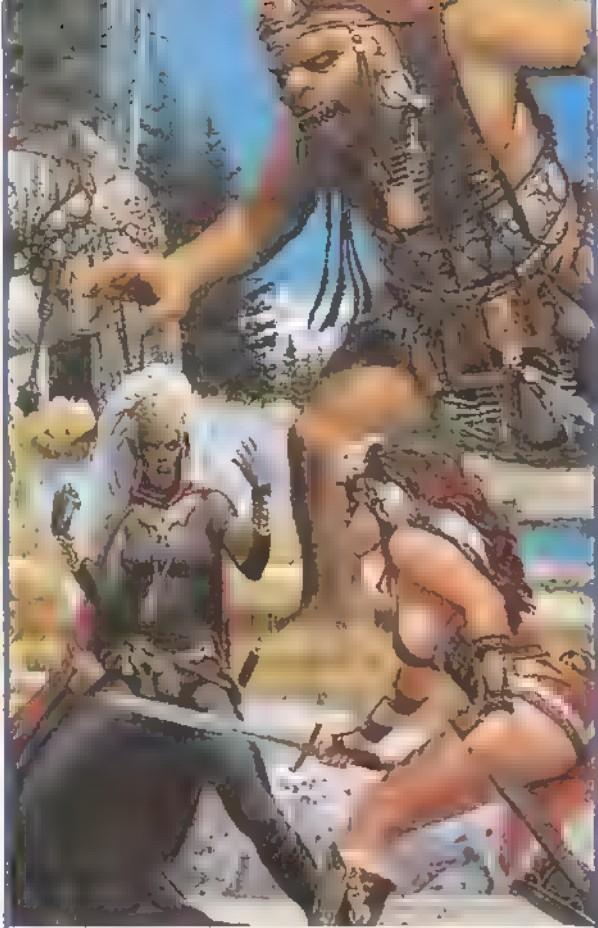
THE FIELD OF BONE



- 1 ISLAND WITH THE TANGRIM
- 2 PASS THROUGH THE CLIFFS
- 3 "THE PIT"
- 4 TO EAST CABILIS



DAMMIT JIM Fighting in the Field of Bones.

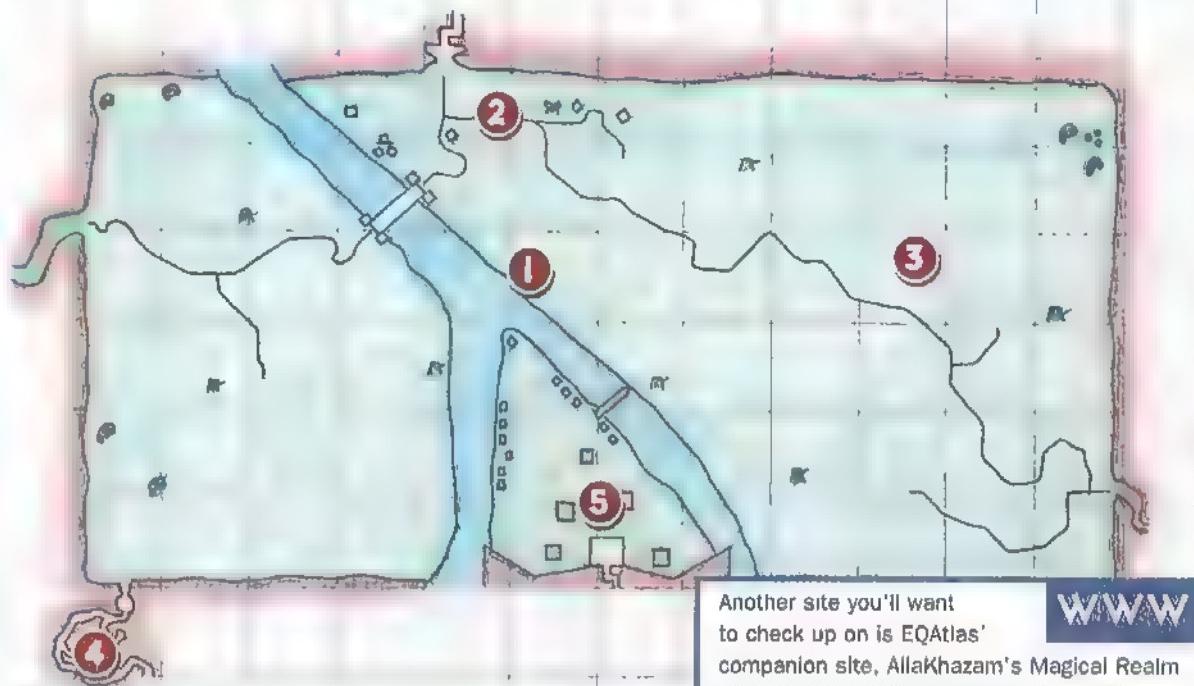


GREATER FAYDARK



- 1 ORC CAMPS
- 2 KELETHIM
- 3 TO BUTCHERBLOCK MOUNTAINS
- 4 TO FELWITHE

THE FEEROTT



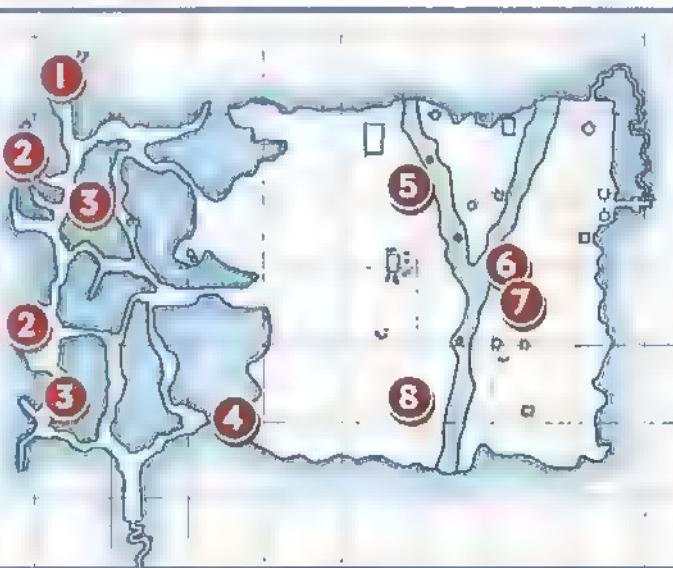
- 1** LIZARD MAN CAMP
- 2** HALF MOON SHAPED ALTAR
- 3** DRUID RING SURROUNDED BY SPIDERS
- 4** SPECTRES AND HIDDEN LAIR OF ENCHANTRESS
- 5** ISLAND REGION OF RUINED TEMPLES TO CAZIC-THULE; HAS ENTRANCE TO THE TEMPLE OF CAZIC-THULE

Another site you'll want to check up on is EQAtlas' companion site, AllaKhzazam's Magical Realm at everquest.allakhazam.com. It has all sorts of info on quests, items, classes, and spells. Using both sites, you're pretty much guaranteed to find great information—and, you'll probably never have to find your corpse again, whether you're a newbie or veteran.

WWW

Other notable EVERQUEST sites include:
EverLore: www.everlore.com
Maximum EverQuest: www.maximumeq.com
EverQuest Stratics: eq.stratics.com

EVERFROST



- 1** MERCHANTS SELLING KITS, SUPPLIES, AND GOODS
- 2** ICE GOBLIN IGLOOS WITH LOW-LEVEL SPAWNS
- 3** ICE GOBLIN IGLOOS
- 4** ICE GOBLIN IGLOOS WITH MID-LEVEL SPAWNS
- 5** "NORTH TOWER" OR "MEGAN'S TOWER"
- 6** TEMPLE INHABITED BY ICY ORCS AND REDWIND
- 7** STONE GIANT STATUE
- 8** "SOUTH TOWER"

Jagged Alliance 2: Unfinished Business

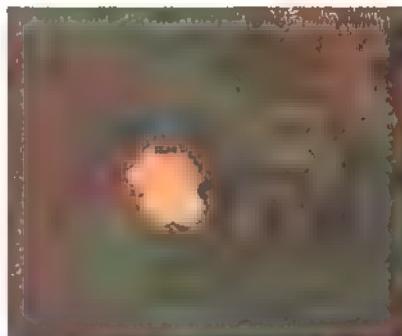
Don't let them interrupt you by Bruce Geryk

JAGGED ALLIANCE 2: UNFINISHED BUSINESS is much shorter than the original, and hence, far more deadly.

You'll have to pay a lot more attention during tactical battles and use your mercenaries in concert, or you'll be picked off one by one. Success depends heavily on who gets the first shot, and you should ensure that the answer to that is "you." To do this, you have to avoid interrupts by the enemy at all costs. There are several ways to maximize your chances.

■ Mercs can fire at an enemy even if they can't see him. If you have someone with good Stealth, camouflage, or Night Ops skill (this works best at night), have him sneak within sight of an enemy. Then, other mercs who are farther away can use their sniper rifles to fire at him. If they have good Marksmanship, they will hit with decent frequency. You can also do this if one of your mercs stumbles upon an enemy during the day. Just be careful: Occasionally the enemy will get an interrupt after the sniper merc fires, and will shoot the merc that he can see.

■ Enemy mercs are less likely to get an



DEATH FROM ABOVE AND BEYOND Along with the grenade, the mortar is an excellent weapon for killing enemies from behind cover. You killed Grunty, you bastard!

interrupt if they can see several of your mercs. Thus, if you know the general location of an enemy, and all your mercs are hidden from view (behind a rock, on top of a building, behind a wall), have the mercs who are the farthest away from the enemy leave cover first. This ensures that the ones who are most vulnerable to an interrupt will be at the longest range. Then, when several of your mercs are visible, expose your closest merc. He should be immune to an interrupt (unless, of course, there is another enemy you didn't know about) and will be able to take the best shot.

■ If your mercs have sufficient skill (meaning Agility and level) not to get interrupted often, make sure to hide them before the end of every turn. Lie prone behind a rock (out of sight), and then sit up (crouch), fire, and go prone again. Don't do this with low-level, low-Agility mercs, though, as you'll simply invite enemy interrupts.

■ Vulnerability to interrupts is a function of Agility and level. Agility is a precious skill, but one that is very difficult to improve. Your mercs can go up in Agility (which increases their Action Points), by sneaking away from an enemy in stealth mode at night. If you see an enemy at night, but he doesn't see you, back off in stealth mode until he's out of sight again. This increases Agility, just like hitting with gunshots increases Marksmanship.

■ Sometimes, despite all of your tricks and stratagems, you'll be faced with an enemy who is simply too tough and who interrupts and wounds everyone who appears in his line of sight. In this case, don't try to overwhelm him in a gunfight, as you'll pay

too high a price (in wounded and killed mercs). Instead, stay out of view and use a grenade. Climbing up on buildings and dropping grenades down onto enemies hiding behind them is an effective tactic.

■ Avoiding interrupts doesn't help much if you can't hit the enemy when you get a chance to fire or don't get enough shots to kill. Use the "junk" (rods, springs, tape, glue, string, etc.) to upgrade your weapons:

- Steel tube + tape + superglue = barrel extender (longer range)
- Aluminum rod + spring = faster firing weapon (fewer Action Points to fire)
- String + can = door alarm **CGW**

Patches Update

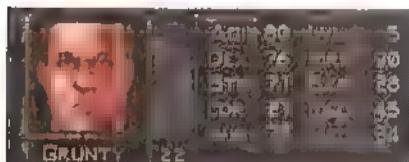
Red Alert 2 Quite a few changes here. For Skirmish mode, there's now a Free-For-All, so AIs will attack each other. A series of hot keys have been added for STARCRAFT fanatics. Tournament players will appreciate the new Observer mode. Finally, for balancing purposes, the Libyan Nuclear Truck was toned down, both in damage and speed.

Combat Mission: Beyond Overlord Several gameplay tweaks—including fiddling with gun range, use of pillboxes, and how to fire ordnance properly. Also, several bugs were fixed.

Sea Dogs If you've just read the review and gotten the game, you'll probably want to patch it first. Just about every bug you can imagine gets fixed in this update. Well, at least the ones that were reported. The patch also added higher resolutions, inverted mouse, auto-save settings, and most of all, a difficulty mode.

Diablo II The latest patch fixes a slew of bugs related to copy-protection woes, video crashes, and character deletion. Also, all spell ranges are now fixed, players have links to ladder records, and various skills for the Paladin and the Amazon have been re-balanced.

Half-Life: Opposing Force Mostly patches up some multiplayer issues and adds a new CTF map to the mix.



WELCOME TO JA CLUB The first rule of JAGGED ALLIANCE is: Don't get Grunty killed!



LOOK WHAT I PICKED UP AT THE SHOW This Lee-Enfield is tricked-out with a bipod, barrel extender, rod and spring, and a sniper scope!



KEEPING YOUR FRIENDS CLOSE AND YOUR ENEMIES FAR Cougar's rifle has a range of 150 (!). Keep him away from the action and let him pick off enemies.

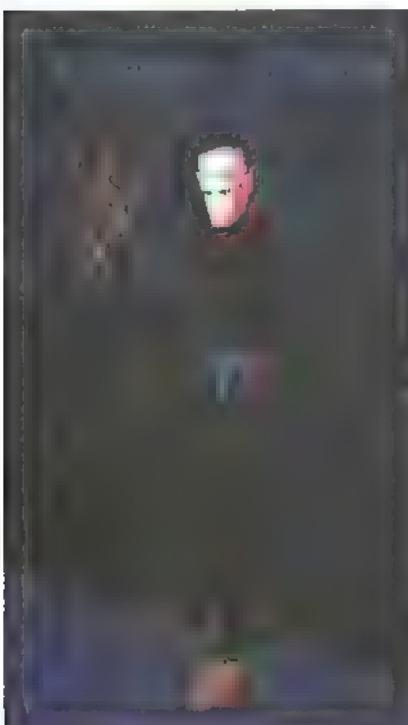
EXPANSION PACK



EVERQUEST: SCARS OF VELIOUS

GOOD HUNTING OUT IN VELIOUS

BY DAVID WHITE



I'M SO VAIN In my attempt to establish "street cred," here I am, sporting Tserrina's robe and her staff.

Time to pick fights with the giants, so to speak. You just bought SCARS OF VELIOUS, you're envious of all the amazing loot trickling back from the new continent, and you're itching to take on some truly tough critters. This is starting to sound just like the release of RUINS OF KUNARK. In its first few months, KUNARK was filled with relatively empty zones, but all that changed when people spent more time in it and started thwacking away for bigger and better adventures and loot. Now, it's not uncommon to see a hundred people in Lake of Ill Omen or Overthere. Looks like VELIOUS is going to experience a similar boom, so before everyone else starts filing in and futzing with the economy, here are some of the highlights of VELIOUS.

TRUE TOWER OF FROZEN SHADOW

If you ever took the boat to Velious, you ran by the Tower of Frozen Shadow, where Tserrina lives. If you are still at level 54 or lower, there'll be monsters to challenge your party. However, Tserrina herself is well worth hunting. The problem is, she's on the seventh floor, and unless someone has her key (which she always seems to be dropping), be prepared for several stages of dungeon crawling, as the keys for each level fall off of triggered MOBS.

Okay, say you've finally managed to get to the seventh floor. Unless Tserrina is up and working around, the first step is to fight your way to the room with the spiral staircase and secure it. This room has at least eight spawn points for torches and familiars. Their respawn is rather quick, so it's important to make sure this room is handled before you start pulling the four bats in the hall hidden behind the Dracoliche tapestry. These bats are the first incarnation of either an enraged vampire or Tserrina herself; either way, the creature spawns immediately out of the bat's corpse after it is slain (similar to black reavers in City of Mist).

Whether Tserrina or an enraged vampire appears, there are ways to go about winning. First of all, both creatures are highly magic-resistant, so don't expect a Snare to stick

Unless your Snarer happens to be your main tank, it's probably not even worth it to try and Snare. If you are going to try, make sure the torches in the other room are cleared. When the not-Snared vampire or Tserrina gets hit, they'll start running. If they're in the bat hall, their pathfinding will take them back into the torch room. A full respawn in the torch room translates into eight angry torches, which adds a lot to the already difficult-to-handle vampire or Tserrina. You'll end up doing CPR with a vampire or Tserrina wandering amongst the corpses.

What you do want is to make sure the party has the best magic-resistance buff possible. Tserrina will charm and fear, among other things. A good damage shield on the tanks never hurts, and nukers should wait, if possible, until Tserrina's down to half before hitting her with Wizard Lures. Mage fire spells, in particular, have been known to stick only partially. When Tserrina gets down on health, she'll try to run or Gate, so you want to finish her off fast. If she successfully Gates, she'll start summoning players one by one and devouring them.

If you successfully slay Tserrina, her key will let you get to the room of mirrors, which is off the spiral staircase from the left mirror on the first floor. From now on, you can go back to visit Tserrina without having to climb seven floors each time. She also drops an



ANGRY HUNGRY VAMPS Be careful when killing bats in the Tower, as they may spawn enraged vampires or Tserrina herself.



DAVEY AND GOLY When you're hunting in the Eastern Wastes, watch — but don't get involved in — fights like this.

array of no-drop caster items with reasonably nice stats and a unique look. By the way, there's a rumor that the tower has an eighth floor. Five of the six mirrors in the room of mirrors will exit a player from the tower to somewhere outside in Iceclad. The sixth mirror doesn't seem to do anything when any of the Tower keys are tried on it. If you identify some of Tserrina's items, there'll be some cryptic statements that could help you discover the final secrets of the Tower.

OUTDOOR HUNTING IN EASTERN WASTES

Druids around Norrath are now calling Eastern Wastes their new home away from home. The appeal comes from the multitude of campsites, as well as plenty of wanderers across the zone for players between levels 30 and 50. Here are some examples:

— The Ry Gorr hut near the bridge. This was the first "great camping spot" because originally there was a level 47-sh Oracle on a



OTTER FOOLERY Check out Cobalt Scar, a cool, underutilized zone filled with wacky monsters like the Otter King.

five-minute timer dropping amazing loot. Even though that particular Oracle has gone, the spot is still a great camp for players between levels 30 through 40 to get some experience points and some high-quality Ry Gorr gear.

— The Ry Gorr Fortress in the center of the zone. There's room for a lot of orc hunters and great monsters such as Chief Ry Gorr (who drops the coveted breastplate of the Ry Gorr armor set). You can pretty much hunt for the complete set of Ry Gorr armor from the fortress, with the exception of the Cloak of the Ry Gorr Oracles. Go hunt some Oracles in the Crystal Caverns for one of those.

— Uithorks, Walruses, and Rhinos near the Krommif Prison on the North Shore. If you are in the high 30s, you can get great experience points from thwacking these goons. You can also get Uithork Head armor here (it's the ornate, brown-colored armor). Go south of Kael to pick up some Uithork breastplate and leggings after gaining a few levels.

Velious is a continually evolving continent, but this should give you a solid foundation toward gaining great experience points and loot, until Verant decides to drop Frost Giants all over the place....

CGW



WAR WITH WARDEN If you see this guy, do not Snare him. He's immune and will summon three guards if you try.

TOP FIVE VELIOUS SPELLS:

5. **Boon of the Garou (level 44 enchanter spell):** Not only does this make your friends look like a werewolf, it also gives a huge dexterity buff to boot. Watch your weapons slice through the air like mad!
4. **Celestial Healing (level 44 cleric):** Healing over time! This is the new hot button being pressed all over Norrath, now.
3. **Enchant Vellum Bar (level 44 enchanter):** Bah! Who needs a Vellum Blue Diamond Bracelet anymore?
2. **Monster Summoning II (level 50 mage):** Say hello to my friend, a level-50 Sand Giant named Gabarn!
1. **Translocate (level 50 wizard):** Hmm, zaps a player back to their bind point. So, wizards got their equivalent of Call of Hero and Summon Corpse.

FIVE MOST ANNOYING VELIOUS MONSTERS :

5. **Ry'Gorr Avengers:** Imagine, a squad of SoW-speed orcs, ready to filet their way through anyone hanging around Ry'Gorr fortress when Chief Ry'Gorr gets killed.
4. **Srons:** "Silly player, just because you have 164 magic resistance and are six levels above me doesn't mean I can't charm you and make you nuke your friends." Earplugs won't work this time.
3. **Wuoshi:** It's bad enough running through the entire city of Kael without any gear so you can get your corpse back in the Wakening Lands. Then you notice a dragon with a range of half a mile, standing above your corpse.
2. **Holgresh:** They're extremely tough for their levels, but if you want some new VELIOUS spells or some of those sweet mojo sticks, you're gonna need to suck it up and hit these guys.
1. **Snow Dervishes:** Everywhere in Iceclad and the Eastern Wastes. They make their presence known with a loud noise and always seem to be smacking you when you port into Iceclad.

DESIGNER TIPS

Icewind Dale: Heart of Winter

Learn how to use the bruisers—straight from the designer
by J.E. Sawyer

In ICEWIND DALE: HEART OF WINTER, your biggest handicap may be not fully understanding all of the powers your characters have available. HEART OF WINTER adds a number of new spells and powers to many of the standard classes. This month, I'll cover the more physical and agile character classes, following up with spellcasters next issue.

Bard

Bards are now in possession of a number of new songs. Their base song, the Ballad of Three Heroes, is still as useful as ever. Two of the new songs, Tymora's Melody and the Song of Kaudies, are invaluable on the Burnt Isle. Use Tymora's Melody to help your party members resist the spells of Ghost Shamans on the surface, and use the Song of Kaudies to counter the dreadful cries of the Wailing Virgins in the barrows. The Siren's Yearning is effective throughout the game, since the majority of your foes have poor saving throws against spells. Use the War Chant of Sith after a long battle; while your characters pick up loot and juggle inventory, the bard will slowly heal them.

Bards still advance at the same rapid rate that they did in the original ICEWIND DALE. When choosing new spells for your bard, you may wish to focus on spells that increase in power with the caster's level. Mordenkainen's Force Missiles, Flame Arrow, Lance of Disruption, and Sunfire are all excellent mid-level spells with tremendous damage potential for bards in the mid-teen levels. Remember: When your

bard is hitting level 15, your wizard is a mosh to level 13. An extra few points of damage always helps.

One of the most powerful magical items in the expansion is the Unstrung Harp. If you have a good or neutral bard with a Wisdom of 13 or higher, you can use the harp to cast Heal once a day. With careful use of the harp, you can practically double the hit points of one party member. In protracted battles, this can turn the tide in your favor.

Paladin

Make use of the paladin's earlier spell access in the expansion. This allows your cleric to swap out low-level healing magic for spells like Magic Stone and Bless. This also makes your paladin useful as another close healer. The cleric's slow casting times, compounded by their distance from a wounded party member, often makes for a difficult time healing in the midst of battle. The more healers you have in your party, the more options you have for quick attention.

Every day, remember to use your paladin's Smite Evil ability. It's easy to forget about abilities if you don't get in the habit of using them. Smite Evil is a paladin's quick and effective way to start a big battle. At level 15, this spell causes between 5 and 30 points of magic damage that can only be thwarted by magic resistance.

Thief

Among the most underpowered classes in the original ICEWIND DALE, thieves now have a number of unique abilities that make them more interesting and fun to play. Perhaps the biggest improvement is their new Sneak Attack ability. If you didn't enable their Sneak Attack during the Heart of Winter configuration, I strongly recommend it. Thieves become much more useful in regular combat situations when they can use Sneak Attack.

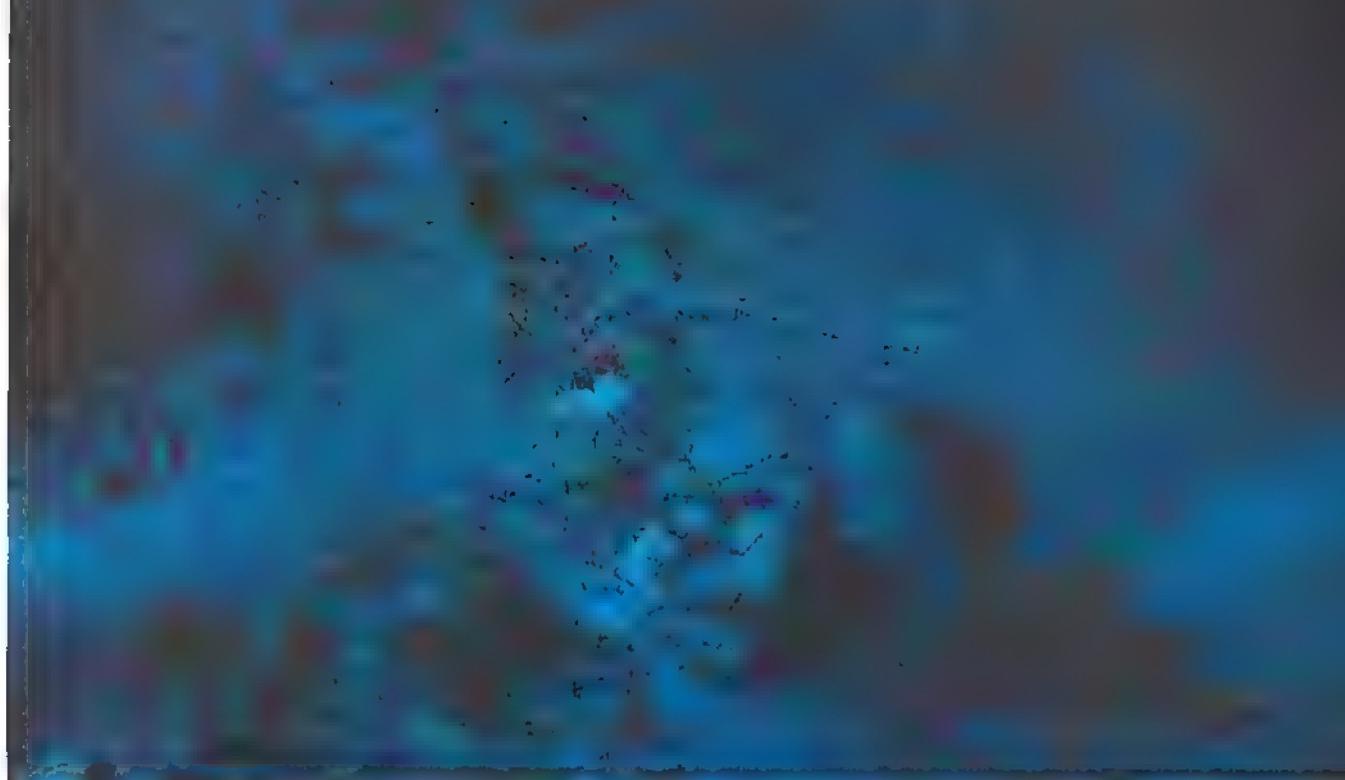


Fighter

While no changes have been made to the fighters, it is a testament to their power that they are still invaluable in the expansion. When your single-classed fighter achieves grand mastery in his or her chosen weapon, pick another weapon proficiency that uses a different damage type. For instance, if your fighter has grand mastery in axes, start adding points to maces. This will be helpful when enemy monsters start to resist certain damage types. High-level fighters are the characters with the best chance of adapting to enemy resistances on a moment's notice.

For multi-classed fighters, spread your specializations across a wide variety of weapons. This will make them even more adaptable than the single-classed fighters, with all the benefits of an accelerated attack rate.

This advice also applies to rangers and paladins.



A SMASHING BLOW Use your fighters' extra proficiency points wisely so that you can switch weapons in the middle of battle

Their damage potential is significantly reduced but their average damage is still very good and much more reliable. The addition of Grappling Strike is an added bonus that can give your party a slight edge in combat. A terrific side effect came along with Sneak Attack! Because a thief's base weapon damage is not multiplied on a attack stat, you can now freely to use a wide variety of thief weapons and still get excellent results.

Evasion can be used to delightful effect. If you find any items that grant bonuses to sav-

ing throws versus spells, give them to your thief. If your thief happens to be a dwarf or a halfling, he or she is already in an excellent position because of the innate rock/saving throw bonuses. When your thief's save versus spell gets down to a low enough level, start kicking off your assaults with a one-two punch from your mage and thief. Send your thief to scout an area. Find the biggest enemy, and position your thief behind it. Have your mage drop an area-effect spell that allows a "save versus spell for half damage." Right before the

spell hits, have your thief Sneak Attack his or her target and start running out of the area.

The double hit of the Sneak Attack and the spell will allow your thief to lead the enemies on a merry chase without much difficulty. Bring up archers to finish off the pursuing boss creatures, and then mop up the rest. Since your thief is already in the mix, he or she is in an excellent position to continue Sneaking/Attacking foes while party fighters engage them. CGW



Ranger

Rangers also have earlier spell access. Entangle and Sunscorch are two spells every mid-level ranger can rely on in a pinch. Even though the former can be saved against and the latter is a low-level spell, both have their merits. Entangle requires no effort after it is cast and can capture even huge creatures. Sunscorch increases in damage with level and can be potent when cast by a seventh-level ranger.

Use the ranger's tracking ability to discern what types of monsters are on a map. Each time you enter a new map, use your ranger's tracking ability and prepare your party according to what he or she finds. This is incredibly useful if you've never played through the core game before.



RACK & FIELD Wise application of ranger tracking can help you strategize, and hence, prepare for encounters with any fools willing to fight you on the map.

SimCoaster

Park design, personnel, and perspiration-inducing challenges by George Jones

Does your park look less like Disneyland and more like Wally World? Before you hazardously create roller coasters that become springboards for litigation, read up on how to make your park pleasing to the eye, and how to keep your people happy. After that, find out how to get through those pesky challenges.

Park Design

Try to build your parks with focal hubs upon which circuits of rides are built. The idea is to get your visitors into a flow that dumps them off one ride and right onto another. Central to those hubs should be wide-open areas with fountains and concessions everywhere. As you build these hubs, add in the appropriate staff, using specific zoning as needed.

Big ticket rides should always be towards the back of the park. Always.

It appears that the Disneyland model of high admission prices with low-cost rides is the most efficient. This said, when you first open a big ride, use all your information kiosks to promote it and leave the price as is. As time goes by, you can gradually start lowering it.

Experiment with exit lines that lead directly into entrance lines for other rides. Sure it's slightly manipulative, but this is business, after all.

Use the information kiosks. Research them as soon as you can, and place them near the entrance of your parks. Another great location for them is right within the exit lines of your most popular rides. Right as guests get off of one ride, you can bombard them with advertisements for another.

Later in the game, particularly when the goals become profit-oriented, rip down money-losing rides (ones that only pull in one or two riders a month). If you've grouped your rides properly, developing clusters at a time, you should be able to rip down whole areas, which will provide you with two key benefits. First, you'll save lots of money in operational costs on the rides and on the surrounding attractions. Second, by shrinking the size of your park, you'll have more concentrated crowds around your more popular rides.

Place trash cans near all the food areas and

the bathrooms, and trees near all the exit lines for exciting rides.

Personnel

Pace yourself financially, and you'll be able to hire as much staff as you want. Since the game has no time constraints, you really only need three scientists, Janitors on the other hand, should be over-supplied—since a dirty park is a huge turn-off for visitors; you should have close to ten. Provided you have security cameras, you'll need only four or five security guards. Entertainers should never be overlooked—three or four of them in specific park areas will have a huge impact on guest happiness, particularly in entrance and exit lines for rides.

It's critically important to set up small, specific patrol zones for your gardeners (who appear to be quite lazy) and your janitors (who are prone to clumping together). Engineers can be assigned broader zones. To bolster happiness in a certain area, select a very small patrol zone—such as a line for a ride—for your entertainers.

Every hub or central area of your park should have staff resting areas. These will cut down on travel time for your employees, which will result in higher park efficiency for cleanliness and safety.

If your scientists are close to striking, wait until their current projects are done, lower their rate of work, and don't assign them anything until they agree to not strike. Then crank the research machine right back up.

Objectives and Challenges

Right off the bat, take on as many challenges as you can in the Land of Invention. Because there is an abundance of land, the game is fairly easy here, provided you hire plenty of staff. Do well, and you'll accumulate enough Golden Tickets and cash to allow you to coast through the game.

To win the guest satisfaction challenges, take them on early in the game, right after you've built a number of quality rides. Take advantage of the surge in happiness that new rides create.

The easiest challenges to surmount involve security, trash, and safety. You can easily win the security and trash challenges by simply throwing human resources at the problem:

To win the security-based challenges, install security cameras as soon as you can, and make sure you have at least five guards (for an average-sized park) with patrol zones.



Park cleanliness is a snap. Get your park all cleaned up first by hiring plenty of janitors. Set at least two-thirds of them to patrol routes, allowing the others to roam. Once your park is spic-and-span, accept the challenge.

For safety-oriented challenges, have your engineers visit every single ride with under 50 percent State of Repair ratings before you accept the mission. Use the List Attractions window to highlight which rides need attention. Once you have this taken care of, you're all set—rides don't randomly break down.

For balloon challenges, use your information kiosks to promote your stores, and place them near the entrance to your park.

The profit challenges are easier than they might appear. Assuming your park is in the black, simply stop adding attractions, and let the cash start rolling in. Now would be a good time to take advantage of the game's first-person perspective...

Challenges that are increasingly difficult are the balloon- and food-oriented ones. These require you to hit certain sales numbers in 30-day periods. Monitor usage for the consumer goods specific to the challenge, and create a surge in demand before you accept it. And don't be afraid to lower prices; sure, it will affect your profits, but only temporarily. For the soda and hot dog challenges, increase food quality and place the desired concessions near popular rides. You can always rip them down after you've won. For drinks, make sure you add ice—it's a cheap way to increase value while lowering cost. **CCW**

Reader's Corner:

Readers rip through RED ALERT 2

In RED ALERT 2, while playing skirmish or multiplayer, the best way to defend yourself from any but the biggest attacks is to play as the Americans. Sink all your money into prism towers, walls, and pill boxes.

Continually drop in paratroopers, and when you have a few 100 or so, rush your enemy's base. You won't have to worry about any attack because your prism towers can, when in a group, destroy anything coming their way. —Josh Steward

Soviets can make a Yuri, take over a school bus, and then use it to transport guys, and the enemy will not shoot at the school bus. —Mike Barager

This siege tactic works for the allies in single-player or single-player. Immediately after the enemy has pressed an unsuccessful attack, or when they have only a few armored units, take a couple dozen GIs, two IFVs, and four to six prism tanks to the outskirts of an enemy base. Place the GIs as a barrier against any armor or troops that come out. If tanks or other armored vehicles attack the GIs, slow them down with a hail of bullets until they come almost to a complete stop; while they are sitting ducks, too far away to damage the tanks, you can pound 'em to dust with the prisms. Infantry will take more abuse than the few tanks you would have sent and keep the enemy armor locked out, while the IFVs can provide air cover. With the

prism tanks blasting away at the base, they will strike a crippling blow well before the enemy base can pull together a sufficient counter attack. —Rusty McCune

First of all, you can run your opponent dry until he has no money left. After that, it's just a matter of time. Building up your own forces, however, is a necessity, as your opponent is most likely going to be able to at least throw a few groups of units at you.

Something really fun to do is to siege his base and/or Ore Trucks with Grand Cannons from all sides—sure, he'll get mad, but what can he do about it?

The one tactic I find most the fun to use, however, is this: Instead of concentrating on defending your base, you amass huge forces of units under the cover of gap generators. In one game, where the enemy had about six prism tanks and maybe a few other units, I uncovered my force of about 60 grizzly tanks, 80 or so rocketeers, 20 IFVs, 20 prism tanks, a few mirage tanks, and some tanpos, and the guy literally screamed "What the hell!?" Honestly, I don't really try to win—I try to have fun, and in the process, it leads to victory. —Nicholas Miskin

Nicholas' tip was actually just the ending paragraph of his massive RED ALERT 2 treatise, so he gets the nod for the best of the reader tips this month. He's getting copies of CARNIVORES: ICE AGE, TIMELINE, and the first issue of Battle Chasers. Enjoy!



Readers! There is a new feature being added to CGW Tips, one with an emphasis on two things: multiplayer and evil. We're looking for the nastiest, most devious trick you can come up with to use in a multiplayer match. A trick so wrought with evil that it will both ensure victory and cause your opponent to curse your name in anguish. Each month, the contributor will get an honest-to-god good game from us. Next month's winner gets a free copy of COMMAND & CONQUER: RED ALERT 2 COLLECTOR'S EDITION.

Dirty Trick of the Month

Now, here's what we consider to be a good Dirty Trick.

Journalist Tom Ham has a truly evil trick when it comes to playing COUNTER-STRIKE. No, he doesn't use the speed cheat, just some good ol' trickery. He happens to have a graffiti tag that looks exactly like a crouching terrorist. He slaps this tag on a wall and hides elsewhere while keeping the tag in his line of sight. A bunch of fools from the other team will probably stumble upon the tag and try to get an easy kill. After a flurry of shots to the wall, followed by a few choice "WTF?!" here and there, he then leaps out and shoots the clueless fools dead.

Easter Eggs



DVD: X-Men

From the disc's main menu, go to the Trailers and TV Spots section. Once there, press the left-arrow key on your remote control, and you will highlight the rose in the upper left corner of the screen. Now press 'Enter,' and you will see a hilarious practical joke scene in which the X-Men meet another superhero from the comic books!

The second hidden feature can be found in the disc's Art Gallery. At the bottom of the screen, you will see Wolverine's dog tags, which can be selected using your remote control. Highlight them and press 'Enter,' and you will see character designs for Beast and the Blob, both X-Men characters that didn't make it into this film but which may make an appearance in the sequel.

Game: Sid Meier's Alpha Centauri

You'll need the ALIEN CROSSFIRE expansion for this. Use the Faction Editor and load the "Sid" file, make sure to add that faction to the game. Next time you play, when choosing a faction, you should see a new one: Firaxians. See what kind of perks being Sid brings when playing ALPHA CENTAURI.

SEND US YOUR TIPS

Send your tips, tricks, and strategies to

cgw_letters@ziffdavis.com

(please put CGTIPS in the subject line).

We'll publish three submissions each month. Please send genuine tips or strategies instead of cheat codes cut-and-pasted from the Internet.

One winner will get something pulled at random from the Computer Gaming World BozoBin®!

CGW Tips

Airfix Dogfighter

Type these codes during gameplay to activate cheat functions:
hybrid God Mode
infusia All Weapons
athena Highest Tech Level
admiral Get Medals
autopilot Autopilot
inertorwing Drive Car
blame Stay Motor
brigandine Faster
hades Lose Mission

Type this code at the mission selection screen:
prometheus Access All Missions

Rogue Spear: Urban Operations

Press [Enter] to bring up the communication window and type the codes below:
teamaged Team God Mode
avalarged God Mode
ubmbrer Health AI
explore No Victory Conditions
brigandine Refill Inventory
theshadowknows Invisibility

Crimson Skies

In the campaign menu, click on the microphone on the left side of the screen and type "Idaho". You will then be able to access any of the missions Invisibility.
After your briefing, type "I am the devil" in the loading menu, and you plane will then be immune to damage.



SWAT 3: Elite Edition

While playing, press [SHIFT] + [-] to bring down the console, then type:
taskforce Complete all objectives, win current mission
johnwoof Slows down entire game process
swatmode God mode for entire team
bigracepeaks Unlimited ammo
coolaid Team missing, pants and shirts
ambushshot Fire weapon fast.
no17 Bodys bleed more when injured
nohades Night missions play as if during the day
whosyourboss Makes teammate fire weapon
hotstuff Suspects are harder to kill
justin Suspects never surrender
mbloca Killer ratio (when shot)

Battle Of Britain

sea_hawk Long Range
fratitive Rapid Fire
byby Homing Missiles
firefoot Long Range Flamethrower
ana Air to Air Turbos

Jagged Alliance 2

Cheat Mode (v1.06+ required)
The cheat ability can be turned on by holding down [CTRL] and typing G A B C I when in the tactical game screen. Beware; if you use these keys, you have the potential to create havoc! For example, if you were to teleport a character to a nonlocal location it could cause problems, etc.
Once cheat mode is turned on, you can use:

(Tactical Screen)
[ALT] + E Make all characters (enemies and NPCs) and items visible
[ALT] + O Kill all enemies in current sector
[ALT] + T Teleport selected character to cursor location
[CTRL] + H Hurt character under cursor or item
[ALT] + D Refresh APs of selected character
[ALT] + R Reload selected character's gun
[CTRL] + U Refresh all characters' health and energy levels (them)
[ALT] + ENTER Abort enemies turn

(Map Screen)
[CTRL] + T In travel mode, teleport squad to vector under cursor

(Laptop)
[+] Increase funds by \$100,000
[-] Decrease funds by \$10,000
[SPACE] While left-clicking, move forces any "away" character to join team

(Others)
[ALT] + B Enemy appears at cursor
[ALT] + C Civilian appears at cursor
[ALT] + I Item appears at cursor
[ALT] + K Mustard gas explosion at cursor
[ALT] + O 100pts of damage to all enemies in sector
[ALT] + S Character changes to monitor
[ALT] + Q Create new character
[ALT] + V Create robot
[ALT] + A Character sits in wheelchair



Sid Meier's Alpha Centauri

While playing a game, press [CTRL] + K to enter the map editor. Then, enter one of the following codes to activate the corresponding cheat function:
[Shift] + [F6] Change year
[Shift] + [F2] Create unit
[Shift] + [F3] Discover technology
[Shift] + [F4] Edit energy credits
[Shift] + [F5] Edit faction diplomacy
[Shift] + [F6] Kill opponent
[Shift] + [F3] Switch sides and rebel view
[Shift] + [F8] View FMV sequences
[Shift] + [F7] View replay

Warlords: Battlecry

Type these codes while playing the game:
IAMATANK God Mode
IAMASEER Review Map
IAMALOSEK Lose Scenario
IAMAWINNER Win Scenario
IAMANARCHMAGE All Spells



Sea Dogs

While at sea, press [Ctrl] + Z and type any of the following codes:
Have live Ship Repaired, Full Crew
expu mna Extra Experience
denoy day Extra Money
get me magic Extra Cannon Damage
make screen shots No Cannon Damage
now i flying Ctrl + P to Move Camera
No from camera 0* on NumPad 0
Fire From Camera
teleport Ctrl + L to Teleport Ship to Camera Location

Colin McRae Rally 2

Create new driver profiles, enter any tag, and then type those words as name:
nilthutona All Cars
gleninnow All Trucks
minimo Mini Cooper S Car
ovilevo Access the Nilthutona Lancer Alternative
onecarefulowner All Cars
olstrand Land Rover Car
johntimby Mini Cooper
jimmysear Sierra Cosworth
colecastar Ford Puma
jetmeowl All Options
monsterneds Escort MK1 Car
golmisterstripes Festiva Car
garywildness Ford Puma Car
nutynate Aggressive Car
turnthathas Background Music
boingboingbel Bounce Music
waveywavey Reverse Tracks
whistlybig Monster Tires
shinybuttoons Shiny Cars
curyfornia Turbo Boost
bouncybouncybouncy Reduced Gravity
coothis Fireball (Press Handshake to Activate)

Insane

Type these cheats at the Main Menu:
GOKARTZ Small Wheels on Vehicles
BIGFOOTZ Large Wheels on Vehicles
BIGHEADZ Drivers Have Large Heads
BOXERZ Drivers Have Large Hands and Feet

System Shock 2

In the game, hit [SHIFT] and [,] together, then type:
pel Give the player full pel points
ubermech Turns the player into human superior
nud pool Give player additional build pool points
shock jump player Jump the player

You can also type:
summon obj [item]
Horo's a comprehensive list of items to summon.

Weapons:

Psi Amp
Wronch
Pistol
Shotgun
Assault Rifle
Laser Pistol
EMP Rifle
Electro Shock
Gran Launcher
Stasis Field Generator
Fusion Cannon
Worm Launcher
Crystal Shard
Virtu Prolif

Ammo:

Standard Clip
HE Clip
AP Clip
Timed Grenade
EMP Grenade
Incendi. Grenade
Prox. Grenade
Toxin Grenade
Small Prism
Large Prism
Painful Shot Box
Rifled Slug Box

Patches:

Mud Patch
Dust Patch
Rad Patch
Medic Kit
Psi Patch
Psi Booster
Speed Boost
Strength Boost
INT Boost

Armor:

Light Armor
Medium Armor
Heavy Armor
Relic Armor
Vacc Suit
Worm Skin

Items:
Soda Can
Chips

Implants:
Wide Machinery
BrownBoost
EndurBoost
SwiftBoost
SmartBoost
WormBlood
WormHeart

Cards:
Mod Card
Science Card
Crew Card
R and D Card

Rec Crew Key
Med Annex Key
Cryo Card
Crew 2 Card

Research Items:
Monkey_Brain
Rumbler Organ
Grub Organ
Swarm Organ
Mn. Over. Organ
Or. Over. Organ
Arach. Organ
Midwife Organ

Other:
Molec. Analyzer
ICE Pick
Recycler
1 Nanite
5 Nanites
10 Nanites
20 Nanites
WormGoo

Hydro Card A (listed as Hydroponics A)
Hydro Card B (listed as Hydroponics B)
Hydro Card D (listed as Hydroponics D)
Bridge Card (listed as Bridge Access Card)
Rick Room Key (listed as Diego's Room Key)
Ops Override Key (again used on Deck 4)
Shuttle Access Key (listed as Shuttle Bay Access)

Get Chemicals:

Type **summon obj chem #** to get a certain chemical for research. Here's the listing of each chemical number and which chemical is associated with that number.

Chem #1 is Fm Fermium
Chem #2 is V Vanadium
Chem #3 is Ga Gallium
Chem #4 is Sb Antimony
Chem #5 is Yttrium
Chem #6 is Cu Copper
Chem #7 is Cf Californium
Chem #8 is Na Sodium
Chem #9 is Os Osmium
Chem #10 is Ir Iridium
Chem #11 is As Arsenic
Chem #12 is Cs Cesium
Chem #13 is Hs Hassium
Chem #14 is Te Tellurium
Chem #15 is Mo Molybdenum
Chem #16 is Tc Technetium
Chem #17 is Ra Radium
Chem #18 is Ba Barium
Chem #19 is Se Selenium

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INSIDE GAMING

GAME DESIGN

by Mark Asher • marka@cdmnet.com

PopTop's Banana Republic

Mark Asher goes behind the scenes with the makers of TROPICO

Editor's Note: This month begins the debut of Inside Game Design, Mark Asher's periodic behind-the-scenes look at the less-than-glamorous work behind the games we play. This month we sent him off to visit PopTop Software, the maker of RAILROAD TYCOON II and the upcoming TROPICO.

I arrive at PopTop after 9am, and the offices are dark. I'm here to see what a typical day is like at a game development company as it nears the end of the development cycle. PopTop is within weeks of finishing up TROPICO, their strategy game of tongue-in-cheek Latin American politics.

Am I the first one here? No, the door's open. I go in and find PopTop's founder, Phil Steinmeyer, working at his desk. I comment on how dark it is in their offices — no lights are on in the main area. He tells me they will turn the lights on later, but near the end of the day when I leave, the lights are still dimmed. These people aren't game developers. They're mushrooms.

The Meeting

Steinmeyer starts the day off with an all-employee meeting. He has a pad and pencil, but Steinmeyer works without reading or taking notes, going down the line and getting progress reports from everyone.

"We're shooting towards getting the beta out on Thursday. How's it looking?"

"Will we be able to burn a demo on the 10th? We don't want to put out a bad demo. What do you think?"

Someone asks about a healthcare insurance problem. Steinmeyer tells them to contact the rep at Take 2, which now owns PopTop. Then they lock down the version of DirectX they want to go with initially, which is version 7. "We don't need anything that 8 has," Steinmeyer concludes. "It might give us driver problems."

One of the big issues at the meeting is who's going to be the filter. The filter? "We need someone who can deal with questions about the demo, collate the problems, and just track the response." David Deen is selected, since he's the person working on the manual and updating the website, among other things. "You know Excel, don't you?" Steinmeyer asks. A few other issues are discussed, such as progress with the art, how the music for the game sounds, how to cut the demo so it isn't hacked like RAILROAD TYCOON II's demo was, and so on. Then the meeting breaks and they return to their offices.

Making the Rounds

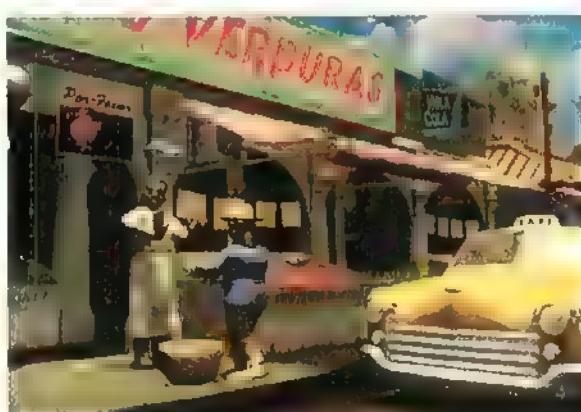
I decide to sit in with each employee and observe. Paul Mullen is one of the artists, and the whole art team has done a nice job on TROPICO—the artwork looks great. He's working on the hospital one of the structures you can build in the game. There's a bug. The fire escape extends too far and is breaking up the "box" allotted for it. The result is that TROPICO's citizens can't navigate around it, even though it looks like there is room. He has to open up 3D Max (the game industry's most popular design software) and redo it.

The file for the art is huge—nearly 30MB. He explains that it's vastly reduced in the game. It takes several trial-and-error passes for Mullen to get the fire escape right.

Craig Matchett is the character artist for TROPICO. He's worrying about the fidget cycles for the characters. They each have an idle animation, like a soccer player kneeing a ball and catching it. He's trying to get just the right amount of fidgeting in the game. Too much fidget and the screen will look like a bunch of third-graders after mainlining Jolt Cola. Too little and it will be the Island of the Dead. We talk and I ask

about the prostitutes in the game. "They're called Showgirls now," he tells me. "But they still do the same thing." I'm curious to see them, so he builds a Cabaret, the building that will be their place of employment. In a minute or two it's ready, and he clicks on the building. "We can see who their customers are by checking the building," he says, peering at the screen. "Well," he says, turning to me with a sheepish grin. "It looks like their first customer was a Priest."

Brent Smith calls himself "the other programmer." Steinmeyer and Smith are the code



Little digital people getting skin cancer in TROPICO.





The staff of PopTop Software. Back row, left to right: Franz Felsl, Phil Steimmeier, Todd Bergantz, Steve Mohesky, Brian Feldges. Front row, left to right: Paul Mullen, Guillermo Garcia-Sampedro, David Dean, Brent Smith, Craig Matchett.

muscle team. Smith is struggling with the installation program for TROPICO when I visit him. "It keeps choking on the file size," he mutters. "The data file is too big for it at 670 megs, though that shouldn't be a problem." Finally, he decides to just split the data file for now rather than continue to wrestle with it. "We've got over 2100 files installed," he tells me. "It can be a headache."

Next I talk to Franz Felsl, another multifaceted worker. Felsl is an artist, assistant designer, does some press relations, and is the person who collects boxes in case they need to ship something out. He has a small, unruly pile of them in his office. Felsl has also been the liaison for the music in the game, dealing with the composer. As I'm talking to Felsl, Steimmeier walks in.

"Franz," he says. "Can you pull together five minutes of gameplay footage for tomorrow and fill out this questionnaire for IDSA for the ESRB rating?" Felsl says that he can, and after Steimmeier leaves, I ask about it. "We have to send them five minutes of recorded gameplay that represents whatever could be construed as anything close to mature content in our game," he tells me, citing the Army fighting the Rebels as an example of in-game violence. The IDSA (International Digital Software Association) reviews the footage and questionnaire and decides on the game's ESRB rating. "Don't they actually play the game to decide on the rating?" I ask him. "Nope," he answers

Brian Feldges is another artist. He's working on the box art for the game. The U.S. box art is done and shows a peaceful island with waves breaking on the shores. The German distributors wanted something a bit bolder for their box. "They like dictators," Feldges tells me. "They asked if we could put a big guy who looks like Castro on the island." We step outside his office to see some proposed art for the Germans on the wall. Yep, it's Castro all night. I can only

wonder what the game art would be like if it were called BERLIN instead of TROPICO.

Steve Mohesky is studying university buildings. He has coffee table books open with photos of Rice University and some others displayed. He's trying to finish up the university building art for TROPICO.

and it's important to him that it looks authentic. "It takes about four days just to do the geometry for a single building," he tells me, using 3D Max to draw some rectangles as an example. "Then it takes another three or four days to add in the textures." As I leave, he's importing a character into his drawing to check the scale of the building.

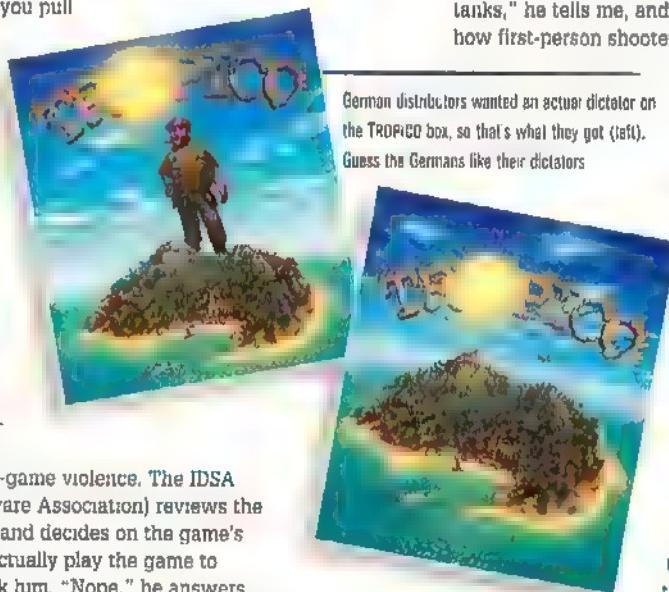
The New Engine

Guillermo Garcia-Sampedro is my last stop of the day. He's not really working on TROPICO, but on PopTop's new engine for their next game. He's a 3D engine stud who's also a tank freak. He has books about tanks and models of tanks all over his office. "I like tanks," he tells me, and then fires up the new engine, explaining how first-person shooters use larger polygons and aren't really suited for strategy games.

"Ever notice how most 3D strategy games only have a few trees on the screen? Phil said he wanted the engine to be able to do lots of trees." On the screen there are hundreds of finely rendered trees. The camera pans smoothly around them, up and down, and Guillermo even makes it go under water. "I don't know if we will have underwater scenes in the next game, but the engine supports it."

As I turn to leave, he says "Want! I want to show you the physics in the engine." Okay, sure. "But I need to add something first." He taps the keyboard and suddenly a big tank appears on screen. He picks it up with the mouse and drops it, showing me the tank's suspension system in action. "I like tanks," he says, grinning.

I call it a day, impressed with the amount of effort that goes into creating even the smallest of details. It's a cold February day in St. Louis as I drive home, but I've got a little bit of Caribbean sunshine with me. I hoped I might get La Bamba or even La Cucaracha on the radio, but it's 'N Sync. Yuck. When I'm the ruler of TROPICO, they'll be the first ones up against the wall! CGW



by Alex Handy • alex_handy@ziffdavis.com

Massively Macintosh??

CGW's Mac dork turns on to CLAN LORD—a Mac-based MMORPG

Being a Mac gamer acclimates you to one thing: being disappointed. Before I came to CGW, I worked at a Mac magazine as the games and entertainment editor. A more bittersweet position in the world of gaming there cannot be. While PC gamers were busy playing BATTLEZONE, MIDTOWN MADNESS, and MIGHT & MAGIC 7, I was stuck reviewing REDNECK RAMPAGE (three years in development for the Mac).

But every once in a while, a game would come along that made me proud to use the first GUI Games like Ambrosia's FERAZEL'S WAND (www.ambrosiasw.com) and Freeverse's BURNING MONKEY SOLITAIRE (www.freeverse.com) helped to make Mac gaming an enjoyable pastime. So what if I was still just playing solitaire; this version has burning monkeys!

Then, one day in 1999, I stumbled upon Delta Tao's website (www.deltatao.com). Delta Tao is the company behind the ubiquitous ERIC'S ULTIMATE SOLITAIRE, definitely one of the best solitaire games for the Mac, despite its distinct lack of burning monkeys. Lo and behold, down at the bottom of the page was a link to the then-in-beta-testing CLAN LORD, Delta Tao's massively multiplayer opus.

Three Classes, No Corpse Runs

CLAN LORD is not a pretty game. Its graphics look like runaways from ULTIMA V, and its interface is downright sparse. But what CLAN LORD lacks in visual beauty it makes up for in personality. The world is completely original, and, with the exception of a few standard races (elves, humans, halflings, and dwarves), uses very few role-playing standards. In fact, there's not a single Orc to be found anywhere on the isles of Lok'grotton. Indeed, there is many a bucking of tradition on these islands that others (EVERQUEST, ASHERON'S CALL, ULTIMA ONLINE) could learn from.

CLAN LORD's size permits its community to be more centralized. The size of CLAN LORD is also a factor in its character classes:

Alex's two-second EVERQUEST rant

If I may be permitted to rant a bit on EVERQUEST server names: Vorani, please simplify these names. It's nice to have server names that reflect the high-fantasy world the game is set in, but some of these names are ridiculously similar to each other and difficult to remember. I don't think anyone would be peeved to find the server Blustaritus:masticus:nantosus renamed to simply "Server 15 (Blustaritus:masticus:nantosus)."



Is CLAN LORD the Mac-head's answer to EVERQUEST?

Warriors, Healers, and Magi. The Warriors smash things, Healers heal other players and resurrect them, and Magi...well, they are the mysterious cloaked figures of the bunch (Magis don't like explaining who or what they are, for some reason).

While the selection is small and variances are almost nil, there is something to be said for keeping things so simple. For starters, there is an entire class here devoted simply to healing. While Healers can't hold their own in a fight, they are a necessity for any adventuring party by virtue of their ability to resurrect fallen party members.

CLAN LORD forgoes the whole "Where the hell is my corpse?" problems of the bigger MMORPGs by using a rather Egyptian death system. When you die, you become stuck in your corpse. The only thing you can do is talk. And shout. Thus, you can call for help. Any Healers that are nearby usually come running to save your sorry butt. However, what if

there are no Healers around? Well, with a quick /depart command, you can send your soul to the ethereal plane and thus be reborn again at the town square in Puddleby. However, to do this you must make a short trip through purgatory—a cloud you must wander through. The more times you depart, the longer you'll spend in purgatory. Then, once you re-materialize in the real world, you're fully stocked with all your hard-won items; only your money is gone. While this may not sound quite so bad, the economic system in CLAN LORD ensures that losing money is quite a severe punishment.

Free XP

Yes, money is fairly hard to come by in Lok'grotton. Delta Tao has substituted innate abilities for flashy swords and piles of gold. Instead of spending all your time searching for a killer axe, you'll be honing your self-heal skill, or getting better balance. And those skills continue to be trained even when you're not playing. When you log off the worlds of CLAN LORD, you can enter the local library and bury yourself in books. When you return, your character gains a minor amount of experience for studying while you were gone. It makes for a nice surprise when you return to your character after not playing for a week or two. After all, you're paying by the month. You should get something even when you don't play, no?

So for all you PC gamers out there who own Macs (yes, both of you), you owe it to yourself to spend at least a few days in Lok'grotton. You can get the demo version over at www.clanlord.com. While it may not be as flashy or deep as EVERQUEST, it's still a satisfying dose of massively multiplayer reality avoidance. **CGW**

Editor's Note: Alex Handy is batting for Tom McDonald this month. McDonald returns to the lineup in June.

by Robert Coffey • robert_coffey@ziffdavis.com

Independent Spirit Awards

D.I.Y. Strategy Gaming

So low budget that it makes *The Blair Witch Project* look like a Biblical epic in comparison, HOLLYWOOD MOGUL is a rarity in the world of modern gaming—a truly independent project created and built by one person, a man who readily admits he's not really a gamer beyond his own product. And, in its own small way, it's a runaway success.

Consider this: Carey DeVuono, the man responsible for HOLLYWOOD MOGUL, has sold untold (truly untold—he won't tell us how many) thousands of copies since releasing the initial DOS version in 1994. The days of designers hawking their wares in Ziploc bags are long gone, and it's testament to the quality of the game and the perseverance of the designer that DeVuono is one of a happy very few able to make a living selling a wholly home-made game.

"I had been under contract at Paramount, hired to write a movie, an office on the lot, the whole works," says DeVuono. "They didn't want to make the movie I'd written, and I moved about in Hollywood, taking meetings, etcetera, for five years or so. Meanwhile, I'd gotten a computer to write my screenplays on, it had BASIC, and one day I just got this idea to 'pitch' a screenplay by filling it out as a 'computer movie' and the idea for HOLLYWOOD MOGUL was born. Visual Basic For DOS had just come out, so I got a book and taught myself to program. It took me two years to do the original DOS version, mostly because I finished the game three times, but started over with a better design. As soon as I re-wrote it for Windows and put it on a CD-ROM, sales took off."

The text-based HOLLYWOOD MOGUL isn't even close to flashy, and DeVuono claims he's made no concessions. He can't afford whiz-bang graphics and music, but if he did, he worries that it might detract from the play experience. "Ultimately, HOLLYWOOD MOGUL is about dreaming big and I don't want to limit your imagination to my imagination."

As far as any other potential concessions are concerned, DeVuono flatly rejects the idea that he's made any. "[The game] is," he states, "exactly what I want it to be." Indeed, he feels strongly that he's held out against making concessions by resisting the big game publisher overtures that other developers dream of receiving. Three times, large companies have approached him about buying the game but he's turned them all down, partly because he felt he was getting a raw deal financially and partly because of a sense of responsibility to the game's fans. "I get email from all over the world from people who play. This is very humbling. I feel responsible to these people who've paid money for my work. I'm responsible for doing the best work that I can do and I can't do that if some game company takes it over or tells me how

each new game should be." And yet...DeVuono is open to some publisher licensing the product if not buying it outright. He writes every line of code himself, and he readily admits it can be a chore.

In between writing movie trailers, DeVuono is gearing up for the next games in the MOGUL series. Television Production and Broadcast Media. The plan is for all of the products to interact allowing players to develop stars and properties that can cross over from one medium to another. DeVuono has big plans for the franchise, but don't hold your breath—with just one man banging away on the games, these are titles that honestly will be released "when they're done."

You can purchase HOLLYWOOD MOGUL and leave your suggestions for Carey DeVuono's next game at www.hollywood-mogul.com **EGW**



Hooray for Hollywood

So...how does HOLLYWOOD MOGUL actually play? Editor-in-Chief George Jones spent a few weeks with the game and delivers the following verdict:

HOLLYWOOD MOGUL ranks right up there with Hasbro's ROLLERCOASTER TYCOON in terms of clever, unexpected addiction. Because you're essentially creating your own story, the game immediately takes on a life of its own that is at the same immensely immersive and intensely personal. The first time you line up the perfect script, top-notch actors, and a huge budget and see the film bomb, you'll know what I mean. The same holds true for the first time you score big with a low-budget, character-oriented film. The beauty of this simulation is that it allows you to make whatever kinds of movies you want. And it's educational too, at least in terms of how long it takes to produce motion pictures.

I can only say one bad thing about HOLLYWOOD MOGUL: I wish it didn't exist in a vacuum. A mode that allowed you to compete with other major studios' releases would not only be more realistic, it would make for even more fun. —George Jones

BY Thierry Nguyen • thierry_nguyen@ziffdavis.com

Weird, Wild World!

Scooter finds the two weirdest action games around

A spy rigging a cell phone to kill his target Real-estate commercials with mythical, testicularly gifted raccoons. Nude gnome lawn ornaments. Sperm-stealing gangsters. Cakes baked with body hair. Headless chickens staying alive for over a year.

The real world is a frighteningly bizarre place, filled with stories of wonder and madness. Yet PC action games stuck to trite, clichéd formulas that have been beaten repeatedly against the wall. Space marines. Artifacts of nigh-omnipotent power. And keys, oh god, the keys.

Where's the weird stuff? Surely, in this world, someone must have had an off-kilter idea and run with it.

While waiting for the perfect fusion of "out-there" concept and execution, I found a great example of each. One is a brilliantly bizarre twist on an old genre, and the other is the hard labor of one fellow with a decidedly unordinary vision. Maybe exposing these works will get other developers to think outside the game box.

Look at My Fanciful Drawings!

First off, thanks to the OldManMurray guys for pointing out this gem called **PENCIL WHIPPED**. Lonnie Flickinger is either a genius or absolutely insane. But he didn't let that stop him from drawing

and designing this shooter. Sure, it's a bit simplistic, but you have to admit, the fact that everything's been hand-drawn makes for much more interesting fare than "The Incontinent And Nigh-Invulnerable Xor will frappe the world in moments unless you stop him with the Ultimate Necrophiler" that most other first-person shooters employ. Besides, the "made at home" feeling (mostly from sound effects) means you don't need a penthouse suite and a budget of millions to get your vision into gamers' hands. Find it at www.maxminn.com/chiselhead.

Mmm...Medulla Oblongata...

Sega has gone and made the greatest melding of education and entertainment ever: **TYPING OF THE DEAD**. It's that classic light-gun zombie shooter, **HOUSE OF THE DEAD**, but you use the keyboard instead of guns. It's Japanese gaming at its most brilliant. The player/character runs around with a keyboard and a Dreamcast strapped to his back (it's a Dreamcast port), and you must type in designated words to shoot down each zombie. To add to the zaniness, they throw in words like "diarrhea" or phrases



PENCIL WHIPPED

TYPING OF THE DEAD



DAIKATANA
Maudlin drinker
Maudlin drinker

like "quarter to 3!" to throw you off. One joyful session of this game, typing things like "Drop 40 winks" to take down a headless axe-wielding zombie makes up for all the time I spent playing **DAIKATANA**.

Please, developers, give us more inspired visions such as these. Stay away from the hackneyed Marine, the ubiquitous Evil Corporation, and embrace the side of you that wanted to make a game about typing zombies to death. **GGW**

No One Laughs Forever

What's with all of these funny games lately? Sure, they've always been around (such as anything Tim Schafer's done), but there was so much humor last year that we called it out as a notable trend. MDK 2 writer Luke Kristianson says, "I have great memories of SMASH TV, EARTHWORM JIM, and DUKE NUKEM, but I suppose it was usually adventure games or RPGs that really took advantage of [humor]. Perhaps it was because they were better forums for straight out 'jokes' and complicated setups. In action games you have far less time to devote to a punch line, so you either have to make a commitment to design the whole game around the silliness you want to inspire, or you take a risk and include scenarios that might seem out of place."

Regarding the future of the funnies, Kristianson posits, "It's the nature of business that if a few humorous games sell well, there will be more to come."

Games strictly identified as 'humor' titles would likely be branded as niche market, but the games industry is growing and those niches are getting bigger."

New Game God Craig Hubbard (**NO ONE LIVES FOREVER**) is more hope-

ful and less predictive, as he merely asks for diversity. "I'm interested in games that play like *Last of the Mohicans*, *Apocalypse Now*, *Road Warrior*, or even *Pulp Fiction*, with the full range of humor, horror, sorrow, elation, and suspense I expect from a good movie or novel. I can name only a few games that have even come close to affecting me that way, such as *METAL GEAR SOLID*, *FINAL FANTASY VII*, and *THIEF*. I want more. Interesting gameplay is crucial, obviously, but the context in which it's framed is also important."

Speaking of Hubbard and NOLF, here's an interesting tidbit regarding the original tone of NOLF:

"We didn't actually set out to make a humorous game, although we did set out to make a '80s spy game, which makes it kind of difficult to take yourself seriously even if you're so inclined. The humor just sort of evolved naturally from there. But if you peel away all the silly dialogue, sight gags, and implied bestiality, you'll find that the underlying narrative is pretty grim. That's what sets NOLF apart from spoofs like *Austin Powers* or *Get Smart*."

by Bruce Geryk • ceremony@net66.com

When SID MEIER'S GETTYSBURG came out a few years ago, many grognards complained that the introduction of real-time strategy concepts to wargaming would poison the genre and turn wargaming into an ahistorical click-fest. I refuse to comment on whether I was one of these sticks-in-the-mud, but now that over three years have passed, all that evidence should have safely faded away so as to allow me plausible deniability.

The game was a hit, and spawned a follow-up game (SID MEIER'S ANTIETAM). Now, the developer of ANTIETAM, BreakAway Games (www.breakawaygames.com), is porting the system to the Napoleonic Wars, which will give wargamers their first taste of detailed Napoleonic grand tactical combat since the demise of the BATTLEGROUND series.

Founded in 1998, BreakAway Games boasts some people who should be familiar to many wargamers: Robert McNamara and Charlie Kibler made their names working on the *Advanced Squad Leader* system at Avalon Hill, and Robert Waters was the last editor of that company's now-defunct (and much mussed) magazine, *The General*. All three were previously with TalonSoft. Designer extraordinaire Joe Balkoski, who lists the *Great Campaigns of the American Civil War* series and *Wooden Ships & Iron Men* among his many com-



The Emperor's Eagles in Realtime

Napoleon goes on a BreakAway

puler and boardgame designs, is also on the team. President Doug Whatley has extensive game industry experience with MicroProse and OT Sports. With an all-star cast like this, it's natural to have high expectations for their upcoming game, WATERLOO.

Shifting from the American Civil War to the Napoleonic Wars isn't just a case of making new maps and changing the uniforms, though. I asked Robert Waters what the biggest problems were (in terms of game design) when making this conversion. "Two things," he replied. "First we had to incorporate a lot of different formations, such as Square, 4-Rank Line, Mass Column, Attack Column, Mixed-Order, etc. And these new formations are not just visual changes; they affect gameplay quite a bit, as anyone familiar with Napoleonic knows."

"Second, another important change was incorporating the cavalry charge. In the Civil War, cavalry was basically mounted infantry that

rode up to a position, dismounted, and engaged. Not so with Napoleonic cavalry. They fought on horseback, charging into the enemy with sabers or lances. We had to make sure that cavalry charges were implemented well, not only for dramatic effect, but also

for realistic gameplay. There's nothing like seeing an entire brigade of lancers running down an enemy battalion."

It's not just tactical combat that has to be revised. According to Robert Waters, while 19th-century battlefield communications weren't much different in 1865 than in 1815, there have been some game adjustments:

"Command and control in WATERLOO work a lot like GETTYSBURG/ANTIETAM. Commander ranks in WATERLOO run from Army Commanders such as Napoleon and Wellington, on down to Corps Commanders, Division Commanders, and finally Brigade Commanders. Only Division and Brigade commanders control troops in the field; Corps and Army Commanders are there for (of course) historical accuracy, but also for gathering the guns for grand batteries, rallying routed troops, and offering morale support to nearby units. In addition to this, we have also put in a feature that allows the player to use Army commanders to 'activate/deactivate' units en masse. They actually have to go around the battlefield and be within the correct radius of their subordinates before they can activate units. This activation/deactivation function directly affects your overall Army Morale."

I got a chance to play a recent beta, and while the system is very similar to GETTYSBURG and ANTIETAM, the feel is unmistakably that of Napoleonic warfare. Formation considerations alone ensure that WATERLOO doesn't just play like a Civil War battle on a Belgian field. Wargamers should be pleasantly surprised at how well the system holds up.

BreakAway Games' WATERLOO is scheduled for release in late March, so it should be available by the time you read this. We'll have a review to let you know if the game lives up to its potential; it's looking pretty good so far. CGW



WATERLOO: NAPOLEON'S LAST BATTLE is the next one from wargame all-stars BreakAway Games.



10 More Games We Want Made

Dewd! Check out these 133t new games from Grizzeen! They rawk!

Elsewhere in this issue, you'll stumble across a nifty little feature about games we wish could get made. It's a fine feature. But did they ask me to participate? Well, yeah they did. But to do so would have involved "going to work" and "doing my job," and I don't have time for that. As Executive Editor, I have too much Web surfing, Napster downloading, and EVERQUEST playing on my plate right now. So get off my back!

Candidly, though, I must admit, now that the issue is done I do feel kind of bad that I didn't contribute. So here's my version of that same feature. Ten future gaming blockbusters, courtesy of yours truly. Designers, feel free to take these ideas and run with 'em. I'm here for you, man.

BitchCraft: Ho's vs. Cheerleaders

It's an RTS game with a side of cheesecake, guaranteed to appeal to both hardcore gamers and the Wal-Mart crowd. Two clans of bably females—the "good" cheerleaders and the "bad" ho's—square off in a real-time 3D slapfest, complete with costume changes and body oil. To keep it real with the hardcore, we'll throw in some missile silos and a few resources to manage, like wheat.

Slim Funeral Parlor

You'll be up to your ears in dead people and formaldehyde in this wacky and morbid new life (or should I say, "death") simulator, in which you must manage the day-to-day business dealings of a dysfunctional family funeral home. It's hilarity and hijinks galore as furnaces break down, bodies go missing, and misdiagnosed living people pound desperately on their caskets as they get lowered into their premature graves. Just keep an eye on that bottom line, though, or it's your business that'll be dead!

Kill The Foreigners!

This bloody first-person shooter lets gamers hunt down and kill a variety of weird, fanatic, and suspiciously

dark-looking people from around the world, using a variety of ultrasophisticated weaponry. Why are they always chanting stuff in the streets? What's their problem? And why can't they speak English like regular people? Well, who cares! Lock and load, soldier, and mow 'em down!

You're A Freakin' Moron

Think YOU DON'T KNOW JACK with attitude. This laugh-a-minute quiz show, hosted by media personality Andrew Dice Clay, is unique in that none of the answers will ever be right! The perfect gag gift for Grandma

Breasts Of Might And Magic

Say hello to the last fantasy RPG you'll ever need. In this innovative combination of massive-multiplayer RPG/Internet porn site, you'll role-play a large pair of breasts (male or female) in the fantasy realm of Cle'a'vaeglaia. Gameplay is still sketchy, the engine's broken, and the servers crash every five minutes, but we'll work out those kinks during the game's second or third year online. (And if anyone complains, we'll ban 'em!)

BloodPurge: The Awakening

Whatever. I just came up with the name—you do what you want with it. Pitch it to Gathering of Developers, they'll put a half-naked chick on the box, and you're all set.

Barbie PMS Meltdown

While little girls and boys take equal interest in computer games, it's a known fact that we start losing the girls around the age of 12 or so. This innovative new title aims to fix that, using the dual marketing muscle of the Barbie license and QUAKE 3 engine to explore the dark world of monthly female angst. Guide our blonde plastic heroine through 12 tough psychological states—including "You Hate Me, Don't

You?" and "I'm Screaming At You About Nothing!"—toward the final reward: a pint of Haagen-Dazs.

Sacred Arc Of Time

This is just a lousy, third-rate, point-and-click adventure that no self-respecting American gamer would be caught dead with. But the cool thing is, we can mass-produce this shovelware

"Shrink the page counts, raise the prices, and underpay your editorial staff"

cheap and airdrop 'em over Europe, cuz them people don't know any better.

Dance, Fatso, Dance!

Music and dancing games are all the rage in Japan and in the console world, but the trend hasn't migrated over to the PC just yet. That's all about to change with my new game, DANCE, FATSO, DANCE!, the first dancing game aimed squarely at overweight, out-of-shape PC gamers. The game will ship with a dance pad that players sit on and then bounce up and down or something while they play. I dunno. I'm still working out the details on this one.

Game Magazine Tycoon

Go behind the scenes and into the trenches of the glamorous world of game magazine publishing! The economy's tanking out there, boss, so be careful! Shrink the page counts, raise the prices, and underpay your editorial staff—whatever it takes. We've got to get our sales/marketing staff off to Cabo for a week, so find that money! CGW

Jeff isn't implying anything bitter in that last item, and hopes the lovely folks on that side of the building had a great time. Send bikini photos to jeff_green@ziffdavis.com

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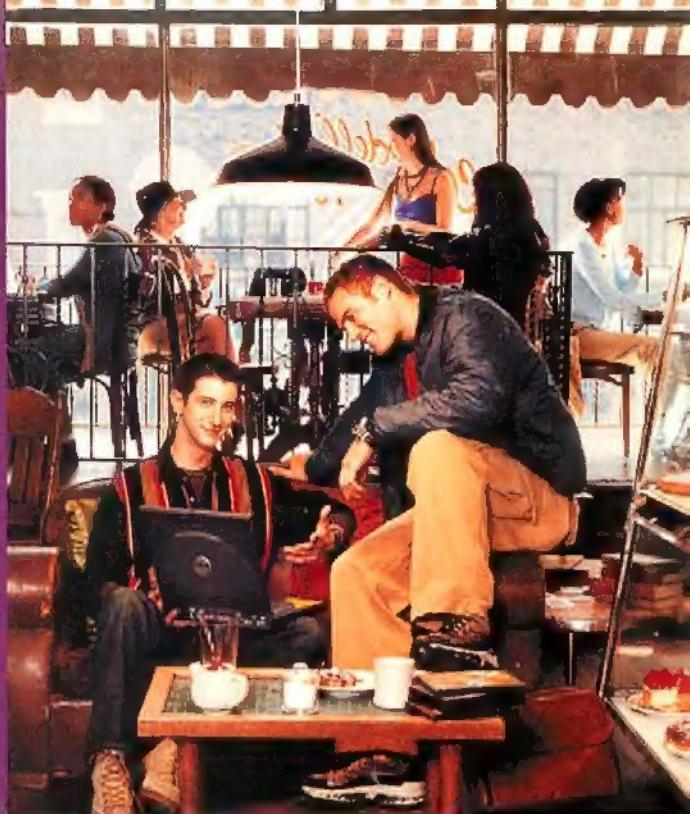
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